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BY

JOHN VISCOUNT MORLEY
O.M., P.C.

HONORARY FELLOW OF ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD

[Rev. ed.]

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
1923

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The text of the present edition follows that of the definitive Edition de Luxe of Lord Morley's Works as revised by the author in 1921.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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EMERSON.[1]

A GREAT interpreter of life ought not himself to need interpretation, least of all can he need it for contemporaries. When time has wrought changes of fashion, mental and social, the critic serves a useful turn in giving to a poet or a teacher his true place, and in recovering ideas and points of view that are worth preserving. Interpretation of this kind Emerson cannot require. His books are no palimpsest, 'the prophet's holograph, defiled, erased, and covered by a monk's.' What he has written is fresh, legible, and in full conformity with the manners and the diction of the day, and those who are unable to understand him without gloss and comment are in fact not prepared to understand what it is that the original has to say. Scarcely any literature is so entirely unprofitable as the so-called criticism that overlays a pithy text with a windy sermon. For our time at least Emerson may best be left to be his own expositor.

Nor is Emerson, either, in the case of those whom the world has failed to recognise, and whom therefore it is the business of the critic to make known and to define. It is too soon to say in what particular niche among the teachers of the race posterity will place him; enough that in our own generation he has already been accepted as one of the wise masters, who, being called to high thinking for generous ends, did not fall below his vocation, but, steadfastly pursuing the pure search for truth, without propounding a system or founding a school or cumbering himself overmuch about applications, lived the life of the spirit, and breathed into other men a strong desire after the right governance of the soul. All this is generally realised and understood, and men may now be left to find their way to the Emersonian doctrine without the critic's prompting. Though it is only the other day that Emerson walked the earth and was alive and among us, he is already one of the privileged few whom the reader approaches in the mood of settled respect, and whose names have surrounded themselves with an atmosphere of religion.

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[1] 1884.

It is not particularly profitable, again, to seek for Emerson one of the labels out of the philosophic handbooks. Was he the prince of Transcendentalists, or the prince of Idealists? Are we to look for the sources of his thought in Kant or Jacobi, in Fichte or Schelling? How does he stand towards Parmenides and Zeno, the Egotheism of the Sufis, or the position of the Megareans? Shall we put him on the shelf with the Stoics or the Mystics, with Quietist, Pantheist, Determinist? If life were long, it might be worth while to trace Emerson's affinities with the philosophic schools; to collect and infer his answers to the everlasting problems of psychology and metaphysics; to extract a set of coherent and reasoned opinions about knowledge and faculty, experience and consciousness, truth and necessity, the absolute and the relative. But such inquiries would only take us the further away from the essence and vitality of Emerson's mind and teaching. In philosophy proper Emerson made no contribution of his own, but accepted, apparently without much examination of the other side, from Coleridge after Kant, the intuitive, *a priori* and realist theory respecting the sources of human knowledge, and the objects within the cognisance of the human faculties. This was his starting-point, and within its own sphere of thought he cannot be said to have carried it any further. What he did was to light up these doctrines with the rays of ethical and poetic imagination. As it has been justly put, though Emersonian transcendentalism is usually spoken of as a philosophy, it is more justly regarded as a gospel.[1] But before dwelling more on this, let us look into the record of his life, of which we may say in all truth that no purer, simpler, and more harmonious story can be found in the annals of far-shining men.

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[1] Frothingham's *Transcendentalism in New England: a History*—a judicious, acute, and highly interesting piece of criticism.

I.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born at Boston, May 25, 1803. He was of an ancient and honourable English stock, who had transplanted themselves, on one side from Cheshire and Bedfordshire, and on the other from Durham and York, a hundred and seventy years before. For seven or eight generations in a direct and unbroken line his forefathers had been preachers and divines, not without eminence in the Puritan tradition of New England. His second name came into the family with Rebecca Waldo, with whom at the end of the seventeenth century one Edward Emerson had intermarried, and whose family had fled from the Waldensian valleys and that slaughter of the saints which Milton called on Heaven to avenge. Every tributary, then, that made Emerson what he was, flowed not only from Protestantism, but from 'the Protestantism of the Protestant religion.' When we are told that Puritanism inexorably locked up the intelligence of its votaries in a dark and straitened chamber, it is worthy to be remembered that the genial, open, lucid, and most comprehensive mind of Emerson was the ripened product of a genealogical tree that at every stage of its growth had been vivified by Puritan sap.

Not many years after his birth, Emerson's mother was left a widow with narrow means, and he underwent the wholesome training of frugality in youth. When the time came, he was sent to Harvard. When

Clough visited America a generation later, the collegiate training does not appear to have struck him very favourably. 'They learn French and history and German, and a great many more things than in England, but only imperfectly.' This was said from the standard of Rugby and Balliol, and the method that Clough calls imperfect had merits of its own. The pupil lost much in a curriculum that had a certain rawness about it, compared with the traditional culture that was at that moment (1820) just beginning to acquire a fresh hold within the old grey quadrangles of Oxford. On the other hand, the training at Harvard struck fewer of those superfluous roots in the mind, which are only planted that they may be presently cast out again with infinite distraction and waste.

When his schooling was over, Emerson began to prepare himself for the ministrations of the pulpit, and in 1826 and 1827 he preached in divers places. Two years later he was ordained, and undertook the charge of an important Unitarian Church in Boston. It was not very long before the strain of forms, comparatively moderate as it was in the Unitarian body, became too heavy to be borne. Emerson found that he could no longer accept the usual view of the Communion Service, even in its least sacramental interpretation. To him the rite was purely spiritual in origin and intent, and at the best only to be retained as a commemoration. The whole world, he said, had been full of idols and ordinances and forms, when 'the Almighty God was pleased to qualify and send forth a man to teach men that they must serve him with the heart; that only that life was religious which was thoroughly good; that sacrifice was smoke and forms were shadows. This man lived and died true to that purpose; and now with his blessed word and life before us, Christians must contend that it is a matter of vital importance, really a duty, to commemorate him by a certain form, whether that form be agreeable to their understandings or not. Is not this to make vain the gift of God? Is not this to make men forget that not forms but duties—not names but righteousness and love—are enjoined?'

He was willing to continue the service with that explanation, and on condition that he should not himself partake of the bread and wine. The congregation would fain have kept one whose transparent purity of soul had attached more than his heresy had alienated. But the innovation was too great, and Emerson resigned his charge (1832). For some five or six years longer he continued occasionally to preach, and more than one congregation would have accepted him. But doubts on the subject of public prayer began to weigh upon his mind. He suspected the practice by which one man offered up prayer vicariously and collectively for the assembled congregation. Was not that too, like the Communion Service, a form that tended to deaden the spirit? Under the influence of this and other scruples he finally ceased to preach (1838), and told his friends that henceforth he must find his pulpit in the platform of the lecturer. 'I see not,' he said, 'why this is not the most flexible of all organs of opinion, from its popularity and from its newness, permitting you to say what you think, without any shackles of proscription. The pulpit in our age certainly gives forth an obstructed and uncertain sound; and the faith of those in it, if men of genius, may differ so much from that of those under it as to embarrass the conscience of the speaker, because so much is attributed to him from the fact of standing there.' The lecture was an important discovery, and it has had many consequences in American culture. Among the more undesirable of them has been (certainly not in Emerson's own case) the importation of the pulpit accent into subjects where one would be happier without it.

Earlier in the same year in which he retired from his church at Boston, Emerson had lost his young wife. Though we may well believe that he bore these agitations with self-control, his health suffered, and in the spring of 1833 he started for Europe. He came to be accused of saying captious things about travelling. There are three wants, he said, that can never be satisfied: that of the rich who want something more; that of the sick who want something different; and that of the traveller who says, Anywhere but here. Their restlessness, he told his countrymen, argued want of character. They were infatuated with 'the rococo toy of Italy.' As if what was true anywhere were not true everywhere; and as if a man, go where he will, can find more beauty or worth than he carries. All this was said, as we shall see that much else was said by Emerson, by way of reaction and protest against instability of soul in the people around him. 'Here or nowhere,' said Goethe inversely to unstable Europeans yearning vaguely westwards, 'here or nowhere is thine America.' To the use of travel for its own ends, Emerson was of course as much alive as other people. 'There is in every constitution a certain solstice when the stars stand still in our inward firmament, and when there is required some foreign force, some diversion or alteration, to prevent stagnation. And as a medical remedy, travel seems one of the best.' He found it so in 1833. But this and his two other voyages to Europe make no Odyssey. When Voltaire was pressed to visit Rome, he declared that he would be better pleased with some new and free English book than with all the glories of amphitheatre and of arch. Emerson in like manner seems to have thought more of the great writers whom he saw in Europe than of buildings or of landscapes. 'Am I,' he said, 'who have hung over their works in my chamber at home, not to see these men in the flesh, and thank them, and interchange some thoughts with them?' The two Englishmen to whom he owed most were Coleridge and Wordsworth; and the younger writer, some eight years older than himself, in whom his liveliest interest had been kindled, was Carlyle. He was fortunate enough to have converse with all three, and he has told the world how these illustrious men in their several fashions and degrees impressed him.[1] It was Carlyle who struck him most. 'Many a time upon the sea, in my homeward voyage, I remembered with joy the favoured condition of my lonely philosopher,' cherishing visions more than divine 'in his stern and blessed solitude.' So Carlyle, with no less cordiality, declares that among the figures that he could recollect as visiting his Nithsdale hermitage—'all like Apparitions now, bringing with them airs from Heaven, or the blasts from the other region, there is not one of a more undoubtedly supernal character than yourself; so pure and still, with intents so charitable; and then vanishing too so soon into the azure Inane, as an Apparition should.'

In external incident Emerson's life was uneventful. Nothing could be simpler, of more perfect unity, or more free from disturbing episodes that leave scars on men. In 1834 he settled in old Concord, the home of his ancestors, then in its third century. 'Concord is very bare,' wrote Clough, who made some sojourn there in 1852, 'and so is the country in general; it is a small sort of village, almost entirely of wood houses, painted white, with Venetian blinds, green outside, with two white wooden churches. There are some American elms of a weeping kind, and sycamores, *i.e.* planes; but the wood is mostly pine—white pine and yellow pine—somewhat scrubby, occupying the tops of the low banks, and marshy hay-land between, very brown now. A little brook runs through to the Concord River.'[1] The brook flowed across the few acres that were Emerson's first modest homestead. 'The whole external appearance of the place,' says one who visited him, 'suggests old-fashioned comfort and hospitality. Within the house the flavour of antiquity is still more noticeable. Old pictures look down from the walls; quaint blue-and-white china holds the simple dinner; old furniture brings to mind the generations of the past. At the right as you enter is Mr. Emerson's library, a large square room, plainly furnished, but made pleasant by pictures and sunshine. The homely shelves that line the walls are well filled with books. There is a lack of showy covers or rich bindings, and each volume seems to have soberly grown old in constant service. Mr. Emerson's study is a quiet room upstairs.'

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[1] *English Traits*, 7-18. *Ireland*, 143-152. Froude's *Carlyle*, ii. 355-359.

Fate did not spare him the strokes of the common lot. His first wife died after three short years of wedded happiness. He lost a little son, who was the light of his eyes. But others were born to him, and in all the relations and circumstances of domestic life he was one of the best and most beloved of men. He long carried in his mind the picture of Carlyle's life at Craigenputtock as the ideal for the sage, but his own choice was far wiser and happier, 'not wholly in the busy world, nor quite beyond it.'

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[1] Clough's *Life and Letters*, i. 185.

'Besides my house,' he told Carlyle in 1838, 'I have, I believe, 22,000 dollars, whose income in ordinary years is six per cent. I have no other tithe or glebe except the income of my winter lectures, which was last winter 800 dollars. Well, with this income, here at home, I am a rich man: I stay at home and go abroad at my own instance, I have food, warmth, leisure, books, friends. Go away from home, I am rich no longer. I never have a dollar to spend on a fancy. As no wise man, I suppose, ever was rich in the sense of *freedom to spend*, because of the inundation of claims, so neither am I, who am not wise. But at home I am rich—rich enough for ten brothers. My wife Lidian is an incarnation of Christianity,—I call her Asia,—and keeps my philosophy from Antinomianism; my mother, whitest, mildest, most conservative of ladies, whose only exception to her universal preference for old things is her son; my boy, a piece of love and sunshine, well worth my watching from morning to night;—these, and three domestic women, who cook and sew and run for us, make all my household. Here I sit and read and write, with very little system, and, as far as regards composition, with the most fragmentary result: paragraphs incompressible, each sentence an infinitely repellent particle.

'In summer, with the aid of a neighbour, I manage my garden; and a week ago I set out on the west side of my house forty young pine trees to protect me or my son from the wind of January. The ornament of the place is the occasional presence of some ten or twelve persons, good and wise, who visit us in the course of the year.'

As time went on he was able to buy himself 'a new plaything'—a piece of woodland, of more than forty acres, on the border of a little lake half a mile wide or more, called Walden Pond. 'In these May days,' he told Carlyle, then passionately struggling with his *Cromwell*, with the slums of Chelsea at his back, 'when maples, poplars, oaks, birches, walnut, and pine, are in their spring glory, I go thither every afternoon, and cut with my hatchet an Indian path through the thicket, all along the bold shore, and open the finest pictures' (1845).

He loved to write at 'large leisure in noble mornings, opened by prayer or by readings of Plato, or whatsoever else is dearest to the Morning Muse.' Yet he could not wholly escape the recluse's malady. He confesses that he sometimes craves 'that stimulation which every capricious, languid, and languescent study needs.' Carlyle's potent concentration stirs his envy. The work of the garden and the orchard he found very fascinating, eating up days and weeks; 'nay, a brave scholar should shun it like gambling, and take refuge in cities and hotels from these pernicious enchantments.'

In the doings of his neighbourhood he bore his part; he took a manly interest in civil affairs, and was sensible, shrewd, and helpful in matters of practical judgment. Pilgrims, sane and insane, the beardless and the gray-headed, flocked to his door, far beyond the dozen persons good and wise whom he had mentioned to Carlyle. 'Uncertain, troubled, earnest wanderers through the midnight of the moral world beheld his intellectual fire as a beacon burning on a hill-top, and climbing the difficult ascent, looked forth into the surrounding obscurity more hopefully than hitherto' (Hawthorne). To the most intractable of Transcendental bores, worst species of the genus, he was never impatient, nor denied himself; nor did he ever refuse counsel where the case was not yet beyond hope. Hawthorne was for a time his neighbour (1842-45). 'It was good,' says Hawthorne, 'to meet him in the wood-paths, or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure intellectual gleam diffused about his presence like the garment of a shining one; and he so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he could impart.'

The most remarkable of all his neighbours was Thoreau, who for a couple of years lived in a hut which he had built for himself on the shore of Walden Pond. If he had not written some things with a considerable charm of style, Thoreau might have been wisely neglected as one of the crazy. But Emerson was struck by the originality of his life, and thought it well in time to edit the writings of one 'who was bred to no profession; never married; lived alone; never went to Church; never voted; refused to pay a tax to the State; ate no flesh, drank no wine, never knew the use of tobacco; had no temptations to fight against, no appetites, no passions, refused all invitations, preferred a good Indian to highly cultivated people, and said he would rather go to Oregon than to London.' The world has room for every type, so that it be not actively noxious, and this whimsical egotist may well have his place in the catalogue. He was, after all, in his life only a compendium, on a scale large enough to show their absurdity, of all those unsocial notions which Emerson in other manifestations found it needful to rebuke. Yet we may agree that many of his paradoxes strike home with Socratic force to the heart of a civilisation that wise men know to be too purely material, too artificial, and too capriciously diffused.

Emerson himself was too sane ever to fall into the hermit's trap of banishment to the rocks and echoes. 'Solitude,' he said, 'is impracticable, and society fatal.' He steered his way as best he could between these two irreconcilable necessities. He had, as we have seen, the good sense to make for himself a calling which brought him into healthy contact with bodies of men, and made it essential that he should have his listeners in some degree in his mind, even when they were not actually present to the eye. As a preacher Emerson has been described as making a deep impression on susceptible hearers of a quiet mind, by 'the calm dignity of his bearing, the absence of all oratorical effort, and the singular simplicity and directness of a manner free from the least trace of dogmatic assumption.' 'Not long before,' says this witness, 'I had listened to a wonderful sermon by Chalmers, whose force and energy, and vehement but rather turgid eloquence, carried for the moment all before him—his audience becoming like clay in the hands of the potter. But I must confess that the pregnant thoughts and serene self-possession of the young Boston minister had a greater charm for me than all the rhetorical splendours of Chalmers' (Ireland, 141).

At the lecturer's desk the same attraction made itself still more effectually felt. 'I have heard some great speakers and some accomplished orators,' Lowell says, 'but never any that so moved and persuaded men as he. There is a kind of undertone in that rich barytone of his that sweeps our minds from their foothold into deep waters with a drift that we cannot and would not resist. Search for his eloquence in his books and you will perchance miss it, but meanwhile you will find that it has kindled all your thoughts.' The same effect was felt in its degree wherever he went, and he took pains not to miss it. He had made a study of his art, and was so skilful in his mastery of it that it seemed as if anybody might do all that he did and do it as well—if only a hundred failures had not proved the mistake.

In 1838 Emerson delivered an address in the Divinity School of Harvard, which produced a gusty shower of articles, sermons, and pamplets, and raised him without will or further act of his to the high place of the heresiarch. With admirable singleness of mind, he held modestly aloof. 'There is no scholar,' he wrote to a friend, 'less willing or less able to be a polemic. I could not give account of myself if challenged. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask me how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of men.' The year before, his oration on the American Scholar had filled Carlyle with delight. It was the first clear utterance, after long decades of years, in which he had 'heard nothing but infinite jangling and jabbering, and inarticulate twittering and screeching.' Then Carlyle enjoined on his American friend for rule of life, 'Give no ear to any man's praise or censure; know that that is *not* it; on the one side is as Heaven, if you have strength to keep silent and climb unseen; yet on the other side, yawning always at one's right hand and one's left, is the frightfullest Abyss and Pandemonium' (Dec. 8, 1837). Emerson's temperament and his whole method made the warning needless, and, as before, while 'vociferous platitude was dinning his ears on all sides,' a whole world of thought was 'silently building itself in these calm depths.' But what would those two divinities of his, Plato and Socrates, have said of a man who 'could not give an account of himself if challenged'? Assuredly not every one who saith Plato, Plato, is admitted to that ideal kingdom.

It was soon after this that the *Dial* was projected. It had its origin in the Transcendental Club, a little knot of speculative students at Boston, who met four or five times a year at one another's houses to discuss questions mainly theological, from more liberal points of view than were at that time common, 'the air then in America getting a little too close and stagnant.' The Club was first formed in 1836. The *Dial* appeared in 1840, and went on for four years at quarterly intervals. Emerson was a constant contributor, and for the last half of its existence he acted as editor. 'I submitted,' he told Carlyle, 'to what seemed a necessity of petty literary patriotism—I know not what else to call it—and took charge of our thankless little *Dial* here, without subscribers enough to pay even a publisher, much less any labourer; it has no penny for editor or contributor, nothing but abuse in the newspapers, or, at best, silence; but it serves as a sort of portfolio, to carry about a few poems or sentences which would otherwise be transcribed or circulated, and we always are waiting until somebody shall come and make it good. But I took it, and it took me and a great deal of good time to a small purpose' (July 1, 1842). On the whole one must agree that it was to small purpose. Emerson's name has reflected lustre on the *Dial*, but when his contributions are taken out, and, say, half a dozen besides, the residuum is in the main very poor stuff, and some of it has a droll resemblance to the talk between Mrs. Hominy and the Literary Ladies and the Honourable Elijah Pogram. Margaret Fuller—the Miranda, Zenobia, Hypatia, Minerva of her time, and a truly remarkable figure in the gallery of wonderful women—edited it for two years, and contributed many a vivid, dashing, exuberant, ebullient page. Her criticism of Goethe, for example, contains no final or valid word, but it is fresh, cordial, and frank, and no other prose contributor, again saving the one great name, has anything to say that is so readable. Nearly all the rest is extinct, and the *Dial* now finds itself far away from the sunshine of human interest.

In 1841 the first series of Emerson's Essays was published, and three years later the second. The Poems were first collected in 1847, but the final version was not made until 1876. In 1847 Emerson paid his second visit to England, and delivered his lectures on Representative Men, collected and published in 1850. The books are said to have had a very slow sale, but the essays and lectures published in 1860, with the general title of *The Conduct of Life*, started with a sale of 2,500 copies, though that volume has never been considered by the Emersonian adept to contain most of the pure milk of the Word.

Then came that great event in the history of men and institutions, the Civil War. We look with anxiety for the part played by the serene thinker when the hour had struck for violent and heroic action. Emerson had hitherto been a Free Soiler; he had opposed the extension of slavery; and he favoured its compulsory extinction, with compensation on the plan of our own policy in the West Indies. He had never joined the active Abolitionists, nor did he see 'that there was any particular thing for him to do in it then.' 'Though I sometimes accept a popular call, and preach on Temperance or the Abolition of Slavery, I am sure to feel, before I have done with it, what an intrusion it is into another sphere, and so much loss of virtue in my own' (*To Carlyle*, 1844). But he missed no occasion of showing that in conviction and aim he was with good men. The infirmities of fanatics never hid from him either the transcendent purity of their motives or the grandeur of their cause. This is ever the test of the scholar: whether he allows intellectual fastidiousness to stand between him and the great issues of his time. 'Cannot the English,' he cried out to Carlyle, 'leave cavilling at petty failures and bad manners and at the dunce part, and leap to the suggestions and finger-pointings of the gods, which, above the understanding, feed the hopes and guide the wills of men?' These finger-pointings Emerson did not mistake. He spoke up for Garrison. John Brown was several times in Concord, and found a hearty welcome in Emerson's house. When Brown made his raid at Harper's Ferry, and the crisis became gradually sharper, Emerson felt that the time had come, and his voice was raised in clear tones. After the sword is drawn, it is deeds not words that interest and decide; but whenever the word of the student was needed Emerson was ready to give the highest expression to all that was best in his countrymen's mood during that greatest ordeal of their time. The inward regeneration of the individual had ever been the key to his teaching, and this teaching had been one of the forces that, like central fire in men's minds, nourished the heroism of the North in its immortal battle.

The exaltation of national character produced by the Civil War opened new and wider acceptance for a great moral and spiritual teacher, and from the close of the war until his death in 1882, Emerson's ascendancy within his own sphere of action was complete, and the public recognition of him universal. Of story, there is no more to tell. He pursued his old way of reading, meditating, conversing, and public lecturing, almost to the end. The afternoon of his life was cloudless as the earlier day, and the shades of twilight fell in unbroken serenity. In his last years there was a partial failure of his memory, and more than one pathetic story is told of this tranquil and gradual eclipse. But 'to the last, even when the events of yesterday were occasionally obscured, his memory of the remote past was unclouded; he would tell about the friends of his early and middle life with unbroken vigour.' So, tended in his home by warm filial devotion, and surrounded by the reverent kindness of his village neighbours, this wise and benign man slowly passed away (April 27, 1882).[1]

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[1] The reader who seeks full information about Emerson's life will find it scattered in various volumes: among them are—

Ralph Waldo Emerson; by George Willis Cooke (Sampson Low & Co., 1882)—a very diligent and instructive work.

R. W. E.; by Alexander Ireland (Simpkin, Marshall, & Co. 1882), described by Carlyle, and known by others, as 'full of energy and broad sagacity and practicality; infinitely well

II.

It cannot be truly said that Emerson is one of the writers who make their way more easily into our minds by virtue of style. That his writing has quality and flavour none but a pure pedant would deny. His more fervent votaries, however, provoke us with a challenge that goes far beyond this. They declare that the finish, charm, and beauty of the writing are as worthy of remark as the truth and depth of the thought. It is even 'unmatchable and radiant,' says one. Such exaggerations can have no reference to any accepted standard. It would in truth, have been a marvel if Emerson had excelled in the virtues of the written page, for most of his published work was originally composed and used for the platform. Everybody knows how different are the speaker's devices for gaining possession of his audience, from the writer's means of winning, persuading, and impressing the attention of his reader. The key to the difference may be that in the speech the personality of the orator before our eyes gives of itself that oneness and continuity of communication, which the writer has to seek in the orderly sequence and array of marshalled

affected to the man Emerson too,'—and full moreover of that intellectual enthusiasm which in his Scotch countrymen goes so often with their practicalities.

Emerson, at Home and Abroad; by Moncure D. Conway (Trübner & Co., 1883): the work of a faithful disciple, who knew Emerson well, and has here recorded many interesting anecdotes and traits.

sentence and well-sustained period. One of the traits that every critic notes in Emerson's writing, is that it is so abrupt, so sudden in its transitions, so discontinuous, so inconsecutive. Dislike of a sentence that drags made him unconscious of the quality, that French critics name *coulant.* Everything is thrown in just as it comes, and sometimes the pell-mell is enough to persuade us that Pope did not exaggerate when he said no one qualification is so likely to make a good writer, as the power of rejecting his own thoughts.

His manner as a lecturer, says Dr. Holmes, was an illustration of his way of thinking. 'He would lose his place just as his mind would drop its thought and pick up another, twentieth cousin or no relation at all to it.' The same manner, whether we liken it to mosaic or to kaleidoscope, marks his writing. It makes him hard to follow, oracular, and enigmatical. 'Can you tell me,' asked one of his neighbour, while Emerson was lecturing, 'what connection there is between that last sentence and the one that went before, and what connection it all has with Plato?' 'None, my friend, save in God!' This is excellent in a seer, but less so in the writer.

Apart from his difficult staccato, Emerson is not free from secondary faults. He uses words that are not only odd, but vicious in construction; he is not always grammatically correct; he is sometimes oblique, and he is often clumsy; and there is a visible feeling after epigrams that do not always come. When people say that Emerson's style must be good and admirable because it fits his thought, they forget that though it is well that a robe should fit, there is still something to be said about its cut and fashion.

No doubt, to borrow Carlyle's expression, 'the talent is not the chief question here: the idea—that is the chief question.' We do not profess to be of those to whom mere style is as dear as it was to Plutarch; of him it was said that he would have made Pompey win the battle of Pharsalia, if it could have given a better turn to a phrase. It would not be worth while to speak of form in a thinker to whom our debt is so large for his matter, if there were not so much bad literary imitation of Emerson. Dr. Holmes mournfully admits that 'one who talks like Emerson or like Carlyle soon finds himself surrounded by a crowd of walking phonographs, who mechanically reproduce his mental and oral accents. Emerson was before long talking in the midst of a babbling Simonetta of echoes.' Inferior writers have copied the tones of the oracle without first making sure of the inspiration. They forget that a platitude is not turned into a profundity by being dressed up as a conundrum. Pithiness in him dwindles into tenuity in them; honest discontinuity in the master is made an excuse for finical incoherencies in the disciples; the quaint, ingenious, and unexpected collocations of the original degenerate in the imitators into a trick of unmeaning surprise and vapid antithesis; and his pregnant sententiousness set the fashion of a sententiousness that is not fertility but only hydropsy. This curious infection, which has spread into divers forms of American literature that are far removed from philosophy, would have been impossible if the teacher had been as perfect in expression as he was pure, diligent, and harmonious in his thinking.

Yet, as happens to all fine minds, there came to Emerson ways of expression deeply marked with character. On every page there are set the strong stamp of sincerity, and the attraction of a certain artlessness; the most awkward sentence rings true; and there is often a pure and simple note that touches us more than if it were the perfection of elaborated melody. The uncouth procession of the periods discloses the travail of the thought, and that too is a kind of eloquence. An honest reader easily forgives the rude jolt or unexpected start when it shows a thinker faithfully working his way along arduous and unworn tracks. Even at the roughest, Emerson often interjects a delightful cadence. As he says of Landor, his sentences are cubes which will stand firm, place them how or where you will. He criticised Swedenborg for being superfluously explanatory, and having an exaggerated feeling of the ignorance of men. 'Men take truths of this nature,' said Emerson, 'very fast;' and his own style does no doubt very boldly take this capacity for granted in us. In 'choice and pith of diction,' again, of which Lowell speaks, he hits the mark with a felicity that is almost his own in this generation. He is terse, concentrated and free from the important blunder of mistaking intellectual dawdling for meditation. Nor in fine does his abruptness ever impede a true urbanity. The accent is homely and the apparel plain, but his bearing has a friendliness, a courtesy, a hospitable humanity, which goes nearer to our hearts than either literary decoration or rhetorical unction. That modest and lenient fellow-feeling which gave such charm to his companionship breathes in his gravest writing, and prevents us from finding any page of it cold or hard or dry.

Though Emerson was always urgent for 'the soul of the world, clean from all vestige of tradition,' yet his work is full of literature. He at least lends no support to the comforting fallacy of the indolent, that originating power does not go with assimilating power. Few thinkers on his level display such breadth of literary reference. Unlike Wordsworth, who was content with a few tattered volumes on a kitchen shelf, Emerson worked among books. When he was a boy he found a volume of Montaigne, and he never forgot the delight and wonder in which he lived with it. His library is described as filled with well-selected authors, with curious works from the Eastern world, with many editions in both Greek and English of his favourite Plato; while portraits of Shakespeare, Montaigne, Goethe, Dante, looked down upon him from the walls. Produce a volume of Plato or of Shakespeare, he says somewhere, or '*only remind us of their names,*' and instantly we come into a feeling of longevity. That is the scholar's speech. Opening a single essay at random, we find in it citations from Montesquieu, Schiller, Milton, Herodotus, Shelley, Plutarch, Franklin, Bacon, Van Helmont, Goethe. So little does Emerson lend himself to the idle vanity of seeking all the treasures of wisdom in his own head, or neglecting the hoarded authority of the ages. It is true that he held the unholy opinion that a translation is as good as the original, or better. Nor need we suppose that he knew that pious sensation of the book-lover, the feel of a library; that he had any of the collector's amiable foolishness about rare editions; or that he nourished festive thoughts of 'that company of honest old fellows in their leathern jackets in his study,' as comrades in a sober old-world conviviality. His books were for spiritual use, like maps and charts of the mind of man, and not much for 'excellence of divertisement.' He had the gift of bringing his reading to bear easily upon the tenor of his musings, and knew how to use books as an aid to thinking, instead of letting them take the edge off thought. There was assuredly nothing of the compiler or the erudite collegian in him. It is a graver defect that he introduces the great names of literature without regard for true historical perspective in their place, either in relation to one another, or to the special phases of social change and shifting time. Still let his admirers not forget that Emerson was in his own way Scholar no less than Sage.

A word or two must be said of Emerson's verses. He disclaimed, for his own part, any belief that they were poems. Enthusiasts, however, have been found to declare that Emerson 'moves more constantly than any recent poet in the atmosphere of poesy. Since Milton and Spenser no man—not even Goethe—has equalled Emerson in this trait.' *The Problem*, according to another, 'is wholly unique, and transcends all contemporary verse in grandeur of style.' Such poetry, they say, is like Westminster Abbey, 'though the Abbey is inferior in boldness.' Yet, strangely enough, while Emerson's poetic form is symbolised by the flowing lines of Gothic architecture, it is also 'akin to Doric severity.' With all the good will in the world, I do not find myself able to rise to these heights; in fact, they rather seem to deserve Wordsworth's description, as mere obliquities of admiration.

Taken as a whole, Emerson's poetry is of that kind which springs, not from excitement of passion or feeling, but from an intellectual demand for intense and sublimated expression. We see the step that lifts him straight from prose to verse, and that step is the shortest possible. The flight is awkward and even uncouth, as if nature had intended feet rather than wings. It is hard to feel of Emerson, any more than Wordsworth could feel of Goethe, that his poetry is inevitable. The measure, the colour, the imaginative figures, are the product of search, not of spontaneous movements of sensation and reflection combining in a harmony that is delightful to the ear. They are the outcome of a discontent with prose, not of that high-strung sensibility which compels the true poet into verse. This must not be said without exception. *The Threnody*, written after the death of a deeply loved child, is a beautiful and impressive lament. Pieces like *Musketaquid*, *The Adirondacs*, *The Snowstorm*, *The Humble-Bee*, are pretty and pleasant bits of pastoral. In all we feel the pure breath of nature, and

> The primal mind,
> That flows in streams, that breathes in wind.

There is a certain charm of *naïveté*, that recalls the unvarnished simplicity of the Italian painters before Raphael. But who shall say that he discovers that 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling,' which a great poet has made the fundamental element of poetry? There are too few melodious progressions; the melting of the thought with natural images and with human feeling is incomplete; we miss the charm of perfect assimilation, fusion, and incorporation; and in the midst of all the vigour and courage of his work, Emerson has almost forgotten that it is part of the poet's business to give pleasure. It is true that pleasure is sometimes undoubtedly to be had from verse that is not above mediocrity, and Wordsworth once designed to write an essay examining why bad poetry pleases. Poetry that pleases may be bad, but it is equally true that no poetry which fails to please can be really good. Some one says that gems of expression make Emerson's essays oracular and his verse prophetic. But, to borrow Horace's well-known phrase, 'tis not enough that poems should be sublime; *dulcia sunto*,—they must be touching and sympathetic. Only a bold critic will say that this is a mark of Emerson's poems. They are too naked, unrelated, and cosmic; too little clad with the vesture of human associations. Light and shade do not alternate in winning and rich relief, and as Carlyle found it, the radiance is 'thin piercing,' leaving none of the sweet and dim recesses so dear to the lover of nature. We may, however, well be content to leave a man of Emerson's calibre to choose his own exercises. It is best to suppose that he knew what he was about when he wandered into the fairyland of verse, and that in such moments he found nothing better to his hand. Yet if we are bidden to place him among the poets, it is enough to open Keats at the *Ode to a Nightingale*, or Shelley at *The Cloud*, the *Skylark*, or the *Sensitive Plant*, or Wordsworth at *Tintern Abbey*, or Goethe at *Das Göttliche*, or Victor Hugo in the *Contemplations*. Then in spite of occasional formality of rhythm and artifice in ornament, we cannot choose but perceive how tuneful is their music, how opulent the resources of their imagination, how various, subtle, and penetrating their affinity to the fortunes and sympathies of men, and next how modest a portion of all these rare and exquisite qualifications reveals itself in the verse of Emerson.

III.

Few minds of the first order that have busied themselves in contemplating the march of human fortunes, have marched forward in a straight line of philosophic speculation unbroken to the end. Like Burke, like Coleridge, like Wordsworth, at a given point they have a return upon themselves. Having mastered the truths of one side, their eyes open to what is true on the other; the work of revolution finished or begun, they experience fatigue and reaction. In Hawthorne's romance, after Miles Coverdale had passed his spring and summer among the Utopians of Blithedale, he felt that the time had come when he must for sheer sanity's sake go and hold a little talk with the Conservatives, the merchants, the politicians, 'and all those respectable old blockheads, who still in this intangibility and mistiness of affairs kept a death-grip on one or two ideas which had not come into vogue since yesterday morning.' 'No sagacious man,' says Hawthorne, 'will long retain his sagacity if he lives exclusively among reformers and progressive people, without periodically returning into the settled system of things, to correct himself by a new observation from that old stand-point.' Yet good men rightly hoped that 'out of the very thoughts that were wildest and most destructive might grow a wisdom, holy, calm, and pure, and that should incarnate itself with the substance of a noble and happy life.' Now that we are able to look back on the crisis of the times that

Hawthorne describes, we perceive that it was as he expected, and that in the person of Emerson the ferment and dissolvency of thought worked itself out in a strain of wisdom of the highest and purest.

In 1842 Emerson told Carlyle, in vindication of the *Dial* and its transcendentalisms, that if the direction of their speculations was as deplorable as Carlyle declared, it was yet a remarkable fact for history that all the bright young men and young women in New England, 'quite ignorant of each other, take the world so, and come and make confession to fathers and mothers—the boys, that they do not wish to go into trade; the girls, that they do not like morning calls and evening parties. They are all religious, but hate the churches; they reject all the ways of living of other men, but have none to offer in their stead.'

It is worth while to transcribe from the *Dial* itself the scene at one of the many Bostonian Conventions of that date—the Friends of Universal Progress, in 1840: —'The composition of the Assembly was rich and various. The singularity and latitude of the summons drew together, from all parts of New England, and also from the Middle States, men of every shade of opinion, from the straightest orthodoxy to the wildest heresy, and many persons whose church was a church of one member only. A great variety of dialect and of costume was noticed; a great deal of confusion, eccentricity, and freak appeared, as well as of zeal and enthusiasm. If the Assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and philosophers, all came successively to the top, and seized their moment, if not their *hour*, wherein to chide or pray or preach or protest. The faces were a study. The most daring innovators, and the champions-until-death of the old cause, sat side by side. The still living merit of the oldest New England families, glowing yet after several generations, encountered the founders of families, fresh merit emerging and expanding the brows to a new breadth, and lighting a clownish face with sacred fire. The Assembly was characterised by the predominance of a certain plain sylvan strength and earnestness' (*Dial*, iii. 101).

If the shade of Bossuet could have looked down upon the scene, he would have found fresh material for the sarcasms which a hundred and fifty years before he had lavished on the Variations of the Protestant Churches. Yet this curious movement, bleak and squalid as it may seem to men nurtured in the venerable decorum of ecclesiastical tradition, was at bottom identical with the yearning for stronger spiritual emotions, and the cravings of religious zeal, that had in older times filled monasteries, manned the great orders, and sent wave upon wave of pilgrims and crusaders to holy places. 'It is really amazing,' as was said by Franklin or somebody else of his fashion of utilitarianism,' that one of the passions which it is hardest to develop in man is the passion for his own material comfort and temporal well-being.'

Emerson has put on record this mental intoxication of the progressive people around him, with a pungency that might satisfy the Philistines themselves.[1] From 1820 to 1844, he said, New England witnessed a general criticism and attack on institutions, and in all practical activities a gradual withdrawal of tender consciences from the social organisations. Calvinists and Quakers began to split into old school and new school. Goethe and the Germans became known. Swedenborg, in spite of his taint of craziness, by the mere prodigy of his speculations, began 'to spread himself into the minds of thousands'—including in no unimportant degree the mind of Emerson himself.[2] Literary criticism counted for something in the universal thaw, and even the genial humanity of Dickens helped to break up the indurations of old theology. Most powerful of all was the indirect influence of science. Geology disclosed law in an unsuspected region, and astronomy caused men to apprehend that 'as the earth is not the centre of the Universe, so it is not the special scene or stage on which the drama of divine justice is played before the assembled angels of heaven.'

A temper of scrutiny and dissent broke out in every direction. In almost every relation men and women asked themselves by what right Conformity levied its tax, and whether they were not false to their own consciences in paying it. 'What a fertility of projects for the salvation of the world! One apostle thought that all men should go to farming; and another thought that no man should buy or sell—that use of money was the cardinal evil; another thought the mischief was in our diet—that we eat and drink damnation. These made unleavened bread, and were foes to the death to fermentation. Others attacked the system of agriculture, the use of animal manures in farming, and the tyranny of man over brute instinct. These abuses polluted his food. The ox must be taken from the plough, and the horse from the cart; the hundred acres of the farm must be spaded, and the man must walk wherever boats and locomotives will not carry him. . . . Others assailed particular vocations. . . . Others attacked the institution of marriage as the fountain of social evils. . . . Who gave me the money with which I bought my coat? Why should professional labour and that of the counting-house be paid so disproportionately to the labour of the porter and the woodsawer? Am I not too protected a person? Is there not a wide disparity between the lot of me and the lot of thee, my poor brother, my poor sister?'

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[1] *New England Reformers: Essays*, ii. 511-519.

[2] The Swedenborgians—'a sect which, I think, must contribute more than all other sects to the new faith, which must come out of all.'—*To Carlyle*, 1834.

One of Emerson's glories is, that while wise enough to discern the peril and folly of these excesses, he was under no temptation to fall back. It was giddy work, but he kept his eye on the fixed stars. Certainly Emerson was not assailed by the stress of mighty and violent events, as Burke and Wordsworth were in some sense turned into reactionaries by the calamities of revolution in France. The 'distemper of enthusiasm,' as Shaftesbury would have called it, took a mild and harmless form in New England: there the work in hand was not the break-up of a social system, but only the mental evolution of new ideals, the struggle of an ethical revival, and the satisfaction of a livelier spirit of scruple. In face of all delirations, Emerson kept on his way of radiant sanity and perfect poise. Do not, he warned his enthusiasts, expend all energy on some accidental evil, and so lose sanity and power of benefit. '*It is of little moment that one or two or twenty errors of our social system be corrected, but of much that the man be in his senses.* Society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him; he has become tediously good in some particular, but negligent or narrow in the rest, and hypocrisy and vanity are often the disgusting result. It is handsomer to remain in the establishment, better than the establishment, and conduct that in the best manner, than to make a sally against evil by some single improvement, without supporting it by a total regeneration.'

Emerson, then, is one of the few moral reformers whose mission lay in calming men rather than in rousing them, and in the inculcation of serenity rather than in the spread of excitement. Though he had been ardent in protest against the life conventional, as soon as the protest ran off into extravagance, instead of either following or withstanding it with rueful petulancies, he delicately and successfully turned a passing agitation into an enduring revival. The last password given by the dying Antonine to the officer of the watch was *Aequanimitas.* In a brighter, wider, and more living sense than was possible even to the noblest in the middle of the second century, this, too, was the watchword of the Emersonian teaching. Instead of cultivating the tormenting and enfeebling spirit of scruple, instead of multiplying precepts, he bade men not to crush their souls out under the burden of Duty; they are to remember that a wise life is not wholly filled up by commandments to do and to abstain from doing. Hence, we have in Emerson the teaching of a vigorous morality without the formality of dogma and the deadly tedium of didactics. If not laughter, of which only Shakespeare among the immortals has a copious and unfailing spring, there is at least gaiety in every piece, and a cordial injunction to men to find joy in their existence to the full. Happiness is with him an aim that we are at liberty to seek directly and without periphrasis. Provided men do not lose their balance by immersing themselves in their pleasures, they are right, according to Emerson, in pursuing them. But joy is no neighbour to artificial ecstasy. What Emerson counsels the poet, he intended in its own way and degree for all men. The poet's habit of living, he says beautifully, should be set on a key so low that the commonest influences should delight him. 'That spirit which suffices quiet hearts, which seems to come forth to such from every dry knoll of sere grass, from every pine-stump and half-embedded stone on which the dull March sun shines, comes forth to the poor and hungry, and such as are of simple taste. If thou fill thy brain with Boston and New York, with fashion and covetousness, and wilt stimulate thy jaded senses with wine and French coffee, thou shalt find no radiance of wisdom in the lonely waste of the pinewoods' (ii. 328).

It was perhaps the same necessity of having to guide men away from the danger of transcendental aberrations, while yet holding up lofty ideals of conduct, that made Emerson say something about many traits of conduct to which the ordinary high-flying moralist of the treatise or the pulpit seldom deigns to stoop. The essays on Domestic Life, on Behaviour, on Manners, are examples of the attention that Emerson paid to the right handling of the outer conditions of a wise and brave life. With him small circumstances are the occasions of great qualities. The parlour and the counting-house are as fit scenes for fortitude, self-control, considerateness, and vision, as the senate or the battlefield. He re-classifies the virtues. No modern, for example, has given so remarkable a place to Friendship among the sacred necessities of well-endowed character. Neither Plato nor Cicero, least of all Bacon, has risen to so noble and profound a conception of this most strangely commingled of all human affections. There is no modern thinker, again, who makes Beauty—all that is gracious, seemly, and becoming — so conspicuous and essential a part of life. It would be inexact to say that Emerson blended the beautiful with the precepts of duty or of prudence into one complex sentiment, as the Greeks did, but his theory of excellence might be better described than any other of modern times by the *καλοκἀγαθία*, the virtue of the true gentleman, as set down in Plato and Aristotle.

So untrue is it that in his quality of Sage Emerson always haunted the perilous altitudes of Transcendentalism, 'seeing nothing under him but the everlasting snows of Himalaya, the Earth shrinking to a Planet, and the indigo Firmament sowing itself with daylight stars.' He never thinks it beneath his dignity to touch a point of minor morals, or to say a good word for what he somewhere calls subterranean prudence. Emerson values mundane circumspection as highly as Franklin, and gives to manners and rules of daily behaviour an importance that might have satisfied Chesterfield. In fact, the worldly and the selfish are mistaken when they assume that Common Sense is their special and exclusive portion. The small transcendentalist goes in search of truth with the meshes of his net so large that he takes no fish. His landscapes are all horizon. It is only the great idealists, like Emerson, who take care not to miss the real.

The remedy for the breakdown of the old churches would, in the mind of the egotist, have been to found a new one. But Emerson knew well before Carlyle told him, that 'no truly great man, from Jesus Christ downwards, ever founded a sect—I mean wilfully intended founding one.' Not only did he establish no sect, but he preached a doctrine that was positively incompatible with the erection of any sect upon its base. His whole hope for the world lies in the internal and independent resources of the individual. If mankind is to be raised to a higher plane of happiness and worth, it can only be by the resolution of each to live his own life with fidelity and courage. The spectacle of one liberated from the malign obstructions to free human character, is a stronger incentive to others than exhortation, admonition, or any sum of philanthropical association. If I, in my own person and daily walk, quietly resist heaviness of custom, coldness of hope, timidity of faith, then without wishing, contriving, or even knowing it, I am a light silently drawing as many as have vision and are fit to walk in the same path. Whether I do that or not, I am at least obeying the highest law of my own being.

In the appeal to the individual to be true to himself, Emerson does not stand apart from other great moral reformers. His distinction lies in the peculiar direction that he gives to his appeal. All those regenerators of the individual, from Rousseau down to J. S. Mill, who derived their first principles, whether directly or indirectly, from Locke and the philosophy of sensation, experience, and acquisition, began operations with the will. They laid all their stress on the shaping of motives by education, institutions, and action, and placed virtue in deliberateness and in exercise. Emerson, on the contrary, coming from the intuitional camp, holds that our moral nature is vitiated by any interference of our will. Translated into the language of theology, his doctrine makes regeneration to be a result of grace, and the guide of conscience to be the indwelling light; though, unlike the theologians, he does not trace either of these mysterious gifts to the special choice and intervention of a personal Deity. Impulsive and spontaneous innocence is higher than the strength to conquer temptation. The natural motions of the soul are so much better than the voluntary ones. 'There is no such thing as manufacturing a strong will,' for all great force is real and elemental. In all this Emerson suffers from the limitations that are inseparable from pure spiritualism in all its forms. As if the spiritual constitution were ever independent of the material organisation bestowed upon the individual at the moment when he is conceived, or of the social conditions that close about him from the instant of his birth. The reaction, however, against what was superficial in the school of the eighteenth century went to its extreme length in Emerson, and blinded his eyes to the wisdom, the profundity, and the fruitfulness of their leading speculations. It is enough for us to note the fact in passing, without plunging into contention on the merits. All thoughts are always ready, potentially if not actually. Each age selects and assimilates the philosophy that is most apt for its wants. Institutions needed regeneration in France, and so those thinkers came into vogue and power who laid most stress on the efficacy of good institutions. In Emerson's America, the fortunes of the country made external circumstances safe for a man, and his chance was assured; so a philosophy was welcomed which turned the individual inwards upon himself, and taught him to consider his own character and spiritual faculty as something higher than anything external could ever be.

Again to make a use which is not uninstructive of the old tongue, Emerson is for faith before works. Nature, he says, will not have us fret and fume. She does not like our benevolences, our churches, our pauper-societies, much better than she likes our frauds and wars. They are but so many yokes to the neck. Our painful labours are unnecessary and fruitless. A higher law than that of our will regulates events. If we look wider, things are all alike: laws and creeds and modes of living are a travesty of truth. Only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong, and by contenting ourselves with obedience we become strong. Our real action is in our silent moments. Why should we be awed by the name of Action? 'Tis a trick of the senses.[1]

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[1] *Essays:* Spiritual Laws, etc.

Justification by faith has had a savour of antinomianism and indifferency ever since the day when Saint Paul so emphatically denied that he made void the law through faith, and said of certain calumniators that their damnation was just. Emerson was open to the same charge, and he knew it. In a passage already quoted, Emerson says good-humouredly that his wife keeps his philosophy from running to antinomianism. He could not mistake the tendency of saying that, if you look wider, things are all alike, and that we are in the grasp of a higher law than our own will. On that side he only paints over in rainbow colours the grim doctrine which the High Calvinist and the Materialistic Necessarian hold in common.

All great minds perceive all things; the only difference lies in the order in which they shall choose to place them. Emerson, for good reason of his own, dwelt most on fate, character, and the unconscious and hidden sources, but he writes many a page of vigorous corrective. It is wholesome, he says, to man to look not at Fate, but the other way; the practical view is the other. As Mill says of his wish to disbelieve the doctrine of the formation of character by circumstances—'Remembering the wish of Fox respecting the doctrine of resistance to governments, that it might never be forgotten by Kings nor remembered by subjects, I said that it would be a blessing if the doctrine of necessity could be believed by all *quoad* the characters of others, and disbelieved in regard to their own.' So Emerson knew well enough that man's consciousness of freedom, action, and power over outer circumstances might be left to take care of itself, as the practical view generally can. The world did not need him to tell it that a man's fortunes are a part of his character. His task was the more far-reaching one of drawing them to recognise that love is the important thing, not benevolent works; that only impure men consider life as it is reflected in events, opinions, and persons; that they fail to see the action until it is done, whereas what is far better worth considering is that its moral element pre-existed in the actor.

It would be easy to show that Emerson has not worked out his answers to these eternal enigmas, for ever reproducing themselves in all ages, in such a form as to defy the logician's challenge. He never shrinks from inconsistent propositions. He was unsystematic on principle. 'He thought that truth has so many facets that the best we can do is to notice each in turn, without troubling ourselves whether they agree.' When we remember the inadequateness of human language, the infirmities of our vision, and all the imperfections of mental apparatus, the wise men will not disdain even partial glimpses of a scene too vast and intricate to be comprehended in a single map. To complain that Emerson is no systematic reasoner is to miss the secret of most of those who have given powerful impulses to the spiritual ethics of an age. It is not a syllogism that turns the heart towards purification of life and aim; it is not the logically enchained propositions of a *sorites*, but the flash of illumination, the indefinable accent, that attracts masses of men to a new teacher and a high doctrine. The teasing *ergoteur* is always right, but he never leads nor improves nor inspires.

Any one can see how this side of the Emersonian gospel harmonised with the prepossessions of a new democracy. Trust, he said, to leading instincts, not to traditional institutions, nor social ordering, nor the formulae of books and schools for the formation of character; the great force is real and elemental. In art, Ruskin has explained the palpable truth that semi-civilised nations can colour better than we do, and that an Indian shawl and China vase are inimitable by us. 'It is their glorious ignorance of all rules that does it; the pure and true instincts have play, and do their work; and the moment we begin teaching people any rules about colour, and make them do this or that, we crush the instinct, generally for ever' (*Modern Painters*, iii. 91). Emerson said what comes to the same thing about morals. The philosophy of democracy, or the government of a great mixed community by itself, rests on a similar assumption in politics. The foundations of a self-governed society on a great scale are laid in leading instincts. Emerson was never tired of saying that we are wiser than we know. The path of science and of letters is not the way to nature. What was done in a remote age by men whose names have resounded far, has no deeper sense than what you and I do to-day. What food, or experience, or succour have Olympiads and Consulates for the Esquimaux seal-hunter, for the Kanáka in his canoe, for the fisherman, the stevedore, the porter? When he is in this vein Emerson often approaches curiously near to Rousseau's memorable and most potent paradox of 1750, that the sciences corrupt manners.[1]

Most men will now agree that when the great fiery trial came, the Emersonian faith and the democratic assumption abundantly justified themselves. Even Carlyle wrote to Emerson at last (June 4, 1871): 'In my occasional explosions against Anarchy, and my inextinguishable hatred of *it*, I privately whisper to myself, "Could any Friedrich Wilhelm now, or Friedrich, or most perfect Governor you could hope to realise, guide forward what is America's essential task at present, faster or more completely than 'Anarchic America' is now doing?" Such "Anarchy" has a great deal to say for itself.'

The traits of comparison between Carlyle and Emerson may be regarded as having been pretty nearly exhausted for the present, until time has changed the point of view. In wit, humour, pathos, penetration, poetic grandeur, and fervid sublimity of imagination, Carlyle is the superior beyond measure. But Emerson is as much his superior in that high and transparent sanity, which is not further removed from midsummer madness than it is from a terrene and grovelling mediocrity. This sanity, among other things, kept Emerson in line with the ruling tendencies of his age, and his teaching brings all the aid that abstract teaching can, towards the solution of the moral problems of modern societies. Carlyle chose to fling himself headlong and blindfold athwart the great currents of things, against all the forces and elements that are pushing modern societies forward. Beginning in his earlier work with the same faith as Emerson in leading instincts, he came to dream that the only leading instinct worth thinking about is that of self-will, mastery, force, and violent strength. Emerson was for basing the health of a modern commonwealth on the only real strength, and the only kind of force that can be relied upon, namely, the honest, manly, simple, and emancipated character of the citizen. This gives to his doctrine a hold and a prize on the work of the day, and makes him our helper. Carlyle's perverse reaction had wrecked and stranded him when the world came to ask him for direction. In spite of his resplendent genius, he had no direction to give, and was only able in vague and turbid torrents of words to hide a shallow and obsolete lesson. His confession to Emerson, quoted above, looks as if at last he had found this out for himself.

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[1] What so good, asks Rousseau, 'as a sweet and precious ignorance, the treasure of a pure soul at peace with itself, which finds all its blessedness in inward retreat, in testifying to itself its own innocence, and which feels no need of seeking a warped and hollow happiness in the opinion of other people as to its enlightenment?'

If Emerson stood thus well towards the social and political drift of events, his teaching was no less harmoniously related to the new and most memorable drift of science which set in by his side. It is a misconception to pretend that he was a precursor of the Darwinian theory. Evolution, as a possible explanation of the ordering of the universe, is a great deal older than either Emerson or Darwin. What Darwin did was to work out in detail and with masses of minute evidence a definite hypothesis of the specific conditions under which new forms are evolved. Emerson, of course, had no definite hypothesis of this sort, nor did he possess any of the knowledge necessary to give it value. But it was his good fortune that some of his strongest propositions harmonise with the scientific theory of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for material existence. He connects his exhortation to self-reliance with the law working in nature for conservation and growth,—to wit, that 'Power is in nature the essential measure of right,' and that 'Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdom which cannot help itself.' The same strain is constantly audible. Nature on every side, within us and without, is for ever throwing out new forms and fresh varieties of living and thinking. To her experiments in every region there is no end. Those succeed which prove to have the best adaptation to the conditions. Let, therefore, neither society nor the individual check experiment, originality, and infinite variation. Such language, we may see, fits in equally well with democracy in politics and with evolution in science. If, moreover, modern science gives more prominence to one conception than another, it is to that of the natural universe of force and energy, as One and a Whole. This too is the great central idea with Emerson, repeated a thousand times in prose and in verse, and lying at the very heart of his philosophy. Newton's saying that 'the world was made at one cast' delights him. 'The secret of the world is that its energies are *solidaires.*' Nature 'publishes itself in creatures, reaching from particles and spicula, through transformation on transformation to the highest symmetries. A little heat, that is, a little motion, is all that differences the bald dazzling white and deadly cold poles of the earth from the prolific tropical climates.' Not only, as Professor Tyndall says, is Emerson's religious sense entirely undaunted by the discoveries of science; all such discoveries he comprehends and assimilates. 'By Emerson scientific conceptions are continually transmuted into the finer forms and warmer lines of an ideal world.'

That these transmutations are often carried by Emerson to the extent of vain and empty self-mystifications is hard to deny, even for those who have most sympathy with the general scope of his teaching. There are pages that to the present writer, at least, after reasonably diligent meditation, remain mere abracadabra, incomprehensible and worthless. For much of this in Emerson, the influence of Plato is mainly responsible, and it may be noted in passing that his account of Plato (*Representative Men*) is one of his most unsatisfactory performances. 'The title of Platonist,' says Mill, 'belongs by far better right to those who have been nourished in, and have endeavoured to practise Plato's mode of investigation, than to those who are distinguished only by the adoption of certain dogmatical conclusions, drawn mostly from the least intelligible of his works.' Nothing is gained by concealing that not every part of Emerson's work will stand the test of the Elenchus, nor bear reduction into honest and intelligible English.

One remarkable result of Emerson's idealism ought not to be passed over. 'The visible becomes the Bestial,' said Carlyle, 'when it rests not on the invisible.' To Emerson all rested on the invisible, and was summed up in terms of the invisible, and hence the Bestial was almost unknown in his philosophic scheme. Nay, we may say that some mighty phenomena in our universe were kept studiously absent from his mind. Here is one of the profoundest differences between Emerson and most of those who, on as high an altitude, have pondered the same great themes. A small trait will serve for illustration. It was well known in his household that he could not bear to hear of ailments. 'There is one topic,' he writes, 'peremptorily forbidden to all well-bred, to all rational mortals, namely, their distempers. If you have not slept, or if you have slept, or if you have headache, sciatica, or leprosy, or thunder-stroke, I beseech you by all angels to hold your peace, and not pollute the morning, to which all the housemates bring serene and pleasant thoughts, by corruption and groans. Come out of the azure. Love the day'—(*Conduct of Life*, 159).

If he could not endure these minor perturbations of the fair and smiling face of daily life, far less did he willingly think of Death. Of nothing in all the wide range of universal topics does Emerson say so little as of that which has lain in sombre mystery at the very core of most meditations on life, from Job and Solon down to Bacon and Montaigne. Except in two beautiful poems, already mentioned, Death is almost banished from his page. It is not the title or the subject of one of his essays, only secondarily even of that on Immortality. Love, Friendship, Prudence, Heroism, Experience, Manners, Nature, Greatness, and a score of other matters—but none to show that he ever sat down to gather into separate and concentrated shape his reflections on the terrifying phantom that has haunted the mind of man from the very birth of time.

Pascal bade us imagine a number of men in chains and doomed to death; some of them each day butchered in sight of the others; those who remained watching their own lot in that of their fellows, and awaiting their turn in anguish and helplessness. Such, he cried, is the pitiful and desperate condition of man. But nature has other cruelties more stinging than death. Mill, himself an optimist, yet declares the course of natural phenomena to be replete with everything which, when committed by human beings, is most worthy of abhorrence, so that 'one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men.' To man himself, moreover, 'the most criminal actions are not more unnatural than most of the virtues.' We need not multiply from poets and divines, from moralists and sages, these grim pictures. The sombre melancholy, the savage moral indignation, the passionate intellectual scorn, with which life and the universe have filled strong souls, some with one emotion and some with another, were all to Emerson in his habitual thinking unintelligible and remote. He admits, indeed, that 'the disease and deformity around us certify that infraction of natural, intellectual, and moral laws, and often violation on violation to breed such compound misery.' The way of Providence, he says in another place, is a little rude, through earthquakes, fever, the sword of climate, and a thousand other hints of ferocity in the interiors of nature. Providence has a wild rough incalculable road to its end, and 'it is of no use to try to whitewash its huge mixed instrumentalities, or to dress up that terrific benefactor in a clean shirt and white neckcloth of a student of divinity.' But he only drew from the thought of these cruelties of the universe the practical moral that 'our culture must not omit the arming of the man.' He is born into the state of war, and will therefore do well to acquire a military attitude of soul. There is perhaps no better moral than this of the Stoic, but greater impressiveness might have marked the lesson if our teacher had been more indulgent to the man's sense of tragedy in that vast drama in which he plays his piteous part.

In like manner, Emerson has little to say of that horrid burden and impediment on the soul, which the churches call Sin, and which, by whatever name we call it, is a very real catastrophe in the moral nature of man. He had no eye, like Dante's, for the vileness, the cruelty, the utter despicableness to which humanity may be moulded. If he saw them at all, it was through the softening and illusive medium of generalised phrases. Nor was he ever shocked and driven into himself by 'the immoral thoughtlessness' of men. The courses of nature, and the prodigious injustices of man in society, affect him with neither horror nor awe. He will see no monster if he can help it. For the fatal Nemesis or terrible Erinnyes, daughters of Erebus and Night, Emerson substitutes a fair-weather abstraction named Compensation. One radical tragedy in nature he admits—'the distinction of More and Less.' If I am poor in faculty, dim in vision, shut out from opportunity, in every sense an outcast from the inheritance of the earth, that seems indeed to be a tragedy. 'But see the facts clearly and these mountainous inequalities vanish. Love reduces them, as the sun melts the iceberg in the sea. The heart and soul of all men being one, this bitterness of His and Mine ceases. His is mine.' Surely words, words, words! What can be more idle, when one of the world's bitter puzzles is pressed on the teacher, than that he should betake himself to an altitude whence it is not visible, and then assure us that it is not only invisible, but non-existent? This is not to see the facts clearly, but to pour the fumes of obscuration round them. When he comforts us by saying 'Love, and you shall be loved,' who does not recall cases which make the Jean Valjean of Victor Hugo's noble romance not a figment of the theatre, but an all too actual type? The believer who looks to another world to redress the wrongs and horrors of this; the sage who warns us that the law of life is resignation, renunciation, and doing-without (*entbehren sollst du*)—each of these has a foothold in common language. But to say that all infractions of love and equity are speedily punished—punished by fear—and then to talk of the perfect compensation of the universe, is mere playing with words, for it does not solve the problem in the terms in which men propound it. Emerson, as we have said, held the spirit of System in aversion as fettering the liberal play of thought, just as in morals, with greater boldness, he rebelled against a minute and cramping interpretation of Duty. We are not sure that his own optimistic doctrine did not play him the same tyrannical trick, by sealing his eyes to at least one half of the actualities of nature and the gruesome possibilities of things. It had no unimportant effect on Emerson's thought that he was born in a new world that had cut itself loose from old history. The black and devious ways through which the race has marched are not real in North America, as they are to us in old Europe, who live on the very site of secular iniquities, are surrounded by monuments of historic crime, and find present and future entangled, embittered, inextricably loaded, both in blood and in institutions, with desperate inheritances from the past.

There are many topics, and those no mean topics, on which the best authority is not the moralist by profession, as Emerson was, but the man of the world. The world hardens, narrows, desiccates common natures, but nothing so enriches generous ones. For knowledge of the heart of man, we must go to those who were closer to the passions and interests of actual and varied life than Emerson ever could have been—to Horace, Montaigne, La Bruyère, Swift, Molière, even to Pope. If a hostile critic were to say that Emerson looked at life too much from the outside, as the clergyman is apt to do, we should condemn such a remark as a disparagement, but we should understand what it is in Emerson that the critic means. He has not the temperament of the great humorists, under whatever planet they may have been born, jovial, mercurial, or saturnine. Even his revolt against formalism is only a new fashion of composure, and sometimes comes dangerously near to moral dilettantism. The persistent identification of everything in nature with everything else sometimes bewilders, fatigues, and almost afflicts. Though he warns us that our civilisation is not near its meridian, but as yet only in the cock-crowing and the morning star, still all ages are much alike with him: man is always man, 'society never advances,' and he does almost as little as Carlyle himself to fire men with faith in social progress as the crown of wise endeavour. But when all these deductions have been made and amply allowed for, Emerson remains among the most persuasive and inspiring of those who by word and example rebuke despondency, purify sight, awaken us from the deadening slumbers of convention and conformity, exorcise the pestering imps of vanity, and lift men up from low thoughts and sullen moods of helplessness and impiety.

CARLYLE.

THE library edition of Carlyle's works (1871) may be taken for the final presentation of all that the author had to say to his contemporaries, and to possess the settled form in which he wished his words to go to those of posterity who may prove to have ears for them. The canon is definitely made up. The golden Gospel of Silence is effectively compressed in thirty fine volumes. After all has been said about self-indulgent mannerisms, moral perversities, phraseological outrages, and the rest, these volumes will remain the noble monument of the industry, originality, conscientiousness, and genius of a noble character, and of an intellectual career that has exercised on many sides the profoundest sort of influence upon English feeling. Men who have long since moved far away from these spiritual latitudes, like those who still find in them an adequate shelter, can hardly help feeling as they turn the pages of the now disused pieces which they were once wont to ponder daily, that whatever later teachers may have done in definitely shaping opinion, in giving specific form to sentiment, and in subjecting impulse to rational discipline, here was the friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark, here the prophet who first smote the rock.

That with this sense of obligation to the master there mixes a less satisfactory reminiscence of youthful excess in imitative phrases, in unseasonably apostolic readiness towards exhortation and rebuke, in interest about the soul, a portion of which might more profitably have been converted into care for the head, is in most cases true. A hostile observer of bands of Carlylites at Oxford and elsewhere might have been justified in describing the imperative duty of work as the theme of many an hour of strenuous idleness, and the superiority of golden silence over silver speech as the text of endless bursts of jerky rapture, while a too constant invective against cant had its usual effect of developing cant with a difference. To the incorrigibly sentimental all this was sheer poison, which continued tenaciously in the system. Others of robuster character no sooner came into contact with the world and its fortifying exigencies, than they at once began to assimilate the wholesome part of what they had taken in, while the rest fell gradually and silently out. When criticism has done its just work on the disagreeable affectations of many of Carlyle's disciples, and on the nature of Carlyle's opinions and their worth as specific contributions, very few people will be found to deny that his influence in stimulating moral energy, in kindling enthusiasm for virtues worthy of enthusiasm, and in stirring a sense of the reality on the one hand, and the unreality on the other, of all that man can do or suffer, has not been surpassed by any teacher of his generation.

One of Carlyle's chief and just glories is, that for more than forty years he clearly saw, and kept constantly and conspicuously in his own sight and that of his readers, the profoundly important crisis in the midst of which we are living. The moral and social dissolution in progress about us, and the enormous peril of sailing blindfold and haphazard, without rudder or compass or chart, were always fully visible to him, and it is no fault of his if they did not become equally plain to his contemporaries. The policy of drifting had no countenance from him. That a society should be likely to last with hollow and scanty faith, with no government, with a number of institutions hardly one of them real, with a horrible mass of poverty-stricken and hopeless subjects; that, if it should last, it could be regarded as other than an abomination of desolation, he boldly and often declared to be things incredible. We are not promoting the objects which the social union subsists to fulfil, nor applying with energetic spirit to the task of preparing a sounder state for our successors. The relations between master and servant, between capitalist and labourer, between landlord and tenant, between governing race and subject race, between the feelings and intelligence of the legislature and the feelings and intelligence of the nation, between the spiritual power, literary and ecclesiastical, and those who are under it—the anarchy that prevails in all these, and the extreme danger of it, were with Carlyle a never-ending theme. What seems to many of us the extreme inefficiency or worse of his solutions, still allows us to feel grateful for the vigour and perspicacity with which he pressed on the world the urgency of the problem.

The degree of durability which his influence is likely to possess with the next and following generations is another and rather sterile question, which we are not now concerned to discuss. The unrestrained eccentricities which Carlyle's strong individuality has precipitated in his written style may, in spite of the poetic fineness of his imagination, which no historian or humorist has excelled, still be expected to deprive his work of that permanence which is only secured by classic form. The incorporation of so many phrases, allusions, nicknames, that belong only to the hour, inevitably makes the vitality of the composition conditional on the vitality of these transient and accidental elements which are so deeply imbedded in it. Another consideration is that no philosophic writer, however ardently his words may have been treasured and followed by the people of his own time, can well be cherished by succeeding generations, unless his name is associated through some definable and positive contribution with the central march of European thought and feeling. In other words, there is a difference between living in the history of literature or belief, and living in literature itself and in the minds of believers. Carlyle was a most powerful solvent, but it is the tendency of solvents to become merely historic. The historian of the intellectual and moral movements of Great Britain during the nineteenth century will fail egregiously in his task if he omits to give a large and conspicuous space to the author of *Sartor Resartus*. But it is one thing to study historically the ideas which have influenced our predecessors, and another thing to seek in them an influence fruitful for ourselves. It is to be hoped that one may doubt the permanent soundness of Carlyle's peculiar speculations, without either doubting or failing to share that warm affection and reverence which his personality worthily inspired in many thousands of his readers. He himself taught us to separate these two sides of a man, and we learnt from him to love Samuel Johnson without reading much or a word that the old sage wrote. 'Sterling and I walked westward,' he says once, 'arguing copiously, but *except* in opinion not disagreeing.'

It is none the less for what has just been said a weightier and a rarer privilege for a man to give a stirring impulse to the moral activity of a generation, than to write in classic style; and to have impressed the spirit of his own personality deeply upon the minds of multitudes of men, than to have composed most of those works which the world is said not willingly to let die. Nor, again, is to say that this higher renown belongs to Carlyle, to underrate the less resounding, but most substantial, services of a definite kind which he has rendered both to literature and history. This work may be in time superseded with the advance of knowledge, but the value of the first service will remain unimpaired. It was he, as has been said, 'who first taught England to appreciate Goethe;' and not only to appreciate Goethe, but to recognise and seek yet further knowledge of the genius and industry of Goethe's countrymen. His splendid drama of the French Revolution has done, and may be expected long to continue to do, more to bring before our slow-moving and unimaginative public the portentous meaning of that tremendous cataclysm, than all the other writings on the subject in the English language put together. His presentation of Puritanism and the Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell first made the most elevating period of the national history in any way really intelligible. The Life of Frederick the Second, whatever judgment we may pass upon its morality, or even upon its place as a work of historic art, is a model of laborious and exhaustive narration of facts not before accessible to the reader of history. For all this, and for much other work eminently useful and meritorious even from the mechanical point of view, Carlyle deserves the warmest recognition. His genius gave him a right to mock at the ineffectiveness of Dryasdust, but his genius was also too true to prevent him from adding the always needful supplement of a painstaking industry that rivals Dryasdust's own most strenuous toil. Take out of the mind of the English reader of ordinary cultivation and the average journalist their conceptions of the French Revolution and the English Rebellion, and their knowledge of German literature and history, as well as most of their acquaintance with the prominent men of the eighteenth century, and we shall see how much work Carlyle has done simply as schoolmaster.

This, however, is emphatically a secondary aspect of his character, and of the function which he has fulfilled in relation to the more active tendencies of modern opinion and feeling. We must go on to other ground, if we would find the field in which he has laboured most ardently and with most acceptance. History and literature have been with him, what they will always be with wise and understanding minds of creative and even of the higher critical faculty—only embodiments, illustrations, experiments, for ideas about religion, conduct, society, history, government, and all the other great heads and departments of a complete social doctrine. From this point of view, the time has perhaps come when we may fairly attempt to discern some of the tendencies which Carlyle has initiated or accelerated and deepened, though assuredly many years must elapse before any adequate measure can be taken of their force and final direction.

It would be a comparatively simple process to affix the regulation labels of philosophy; to say that Carlyle is a Pantheist in religion (or a Pot-theist, to use the alternative whose flippancy gave such offence to Sterling on one occasion[1]), a Transcendentalist or Intuitionist in ethics, an Absolutist in politics, and so forth, with the addition of a crowd of privative or negative epithets at discretion. But classifications of this sort are the worst enemies of true knowledge. Such names are by the vast majority, even of persons who think themselves educated, imperfectly apprehended, ignorantly interpreted, and crudely and recklessly applied. It is not too much to say that nine out of ten people who think they have delivered themselves of a criticism when they call Carlyle a Pantheist, could neither explain with any precision what Pantheism is, nor have ever thought of determining the parts of his writings where this particular monster is believed to lurk. Labels are devices for saving talkative persons the trouble of thinking. As I once wrote elsewhere:

"The readiness to use general names in speaking of the greater subjects, and the fitness which qualifies a man to use them, commonly exist in inverse proportions. If we reflect on the conditions out of which ordinary opinion is generated, we may well be startled at the profuse liberality with which names of the widest and most complex and variable significance are bestowed on all hands. The majority of the ideas which constitute most men's intellectual stock-in-trade have accrued by processes quite distinct from fair reasoning and consequent conviction. This is so notorious, that it is amazing how so many people can go on freely and rapidly labelling thinkers or writers with names which they themselves are not competent to bestow, and which their hearers are not competent either to understand generally, or to test in the specific instance.'

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[1] *Life of John Sterling*, p. 153.

These labels are rather more worthless than usual in the present case, because Carlyle is ostentatiously illogical and defiantly inconsistent; and, therefore, the term which might correctly describe one side of his teaching or belief would be tolerably sure to give a wholly false impression of some of its other sides. The qualifications necessary to make any one of the regular epithets fairly applicable would have to be so many that the glosses would virtually overlay the text. We shall be more likely to reach an instructive appreciation by discarding such substitutes for examination, and considering, not what pantheistic, absolutist, transcendental, or any other doctrine means, or what it is worth, but what it is that Carlyle means about men, their character, their relations to one another, and what that is worth.

With most men and women the master element in their opinions is obviously neither their own reason nor their own imagination, independently exercised, but only mere use and wont, chequered by fortuitous sensations, and modified in the better cases by the influence of a favourite teacher; while in the worse the teacher is the favourite who happens to chime in most harmoniously with prepossessions, or most effectually to nurse and exaggerate them. Among the superior minds the balance between reason and imagination is scarcely ever held exactly true, nor is either firmly kept within the precise bounds that are proper to it. It is a question of temperament which of the two mental attitudes becomes fixed and habitual, as it is a question of temperament how violently either of them straitens and distorts the normal faculties of vision. The man who prides himself on a hard head, which would usually be better described as a thin head, may and constantly does fall into a confirmed manner of judging character and circumstance, so narrow, one-sided, and elaborately superficial, as to make common sense shudder at the crimes that are committed in the divine name of reason. Excess on the other side leads people into emotional transports, in which the pre-eminent respect that is due to truth, the difficulty of discovering the truth, the narrowness of the way that leads thereto, the merits of intellectual precision and definiteness, and even the merits of moral precision and definiteness, are all effectually veiled by purple or fiery clouds of anger, sympathy, and sentimentalism, which imagination has hung over the intelligence.

The familiar distinction between the poetic and the scientific temper is another way of stating the same difference. The one fuses or crystallises external objects and circumstances in the medium of human feeling and passion; the other is concerned with the relations of objects and circumstances among themselves, including in them all the facts of human consciousness, and with the discovery and classification of these relations. There is, too, a corresponding distinction between the aspects which conduct, character, social movement, and the objects of nature are able to present, according as we scrutinise them with a view to exactitude of knowledge, or are stirred by some appeal which they make to our various faculties and forms of sensibility, our tenderness, sympathy, awe, terror, love of beauty, and all the other emotions in this momentous catalogue. The starry heavens have one side for the astronomer, as astronomer, and another for the poet, as poet. The nightingale, the skylark, the cuckoo, move one sort of interest in an ornithologist, and a very different sort in a Shelley or a Wordsworth. The hoary and stupendous formations of the inorganic world, the thousand tribes of insects, the great universe of plants, from those whose size and form and hue make us afraid as if they were deadly monsters, down to 'the meanest flower that blows,' all these are clothed with one set of attributes by scientific intelligence, and with another by sentiment, fancy, and imaginative association.

The contentiousness of rival schools of philosophy has obscured the application of the same distinction to the various orders of fact more nearly and immediately relating to man and the social union. One school has maintained the virtually unmeaning doctrine that the will is free, and therefore its followers never gave any quarter to the idea that man was as proper an object of scientific scrutiny, morally and historically, as they could not deny him to be anatomically and physiologically. Their enemies have been more concerned to dislodge them from this position than to fortify, organise, and cultivate their own. The consequences have not been without their danger. Poetic persons have rushed in where scientific persons ought not to have feared to tread. That human character and the order of events have their poetic aspect, and that their poetic treatment demands the rarest and most valuable qualities of mind, is a truth which none but narrow and superficial men of the world are rash enough to deny. But that there is a scientific aspect of these things, an order among them that can only be understood and criticised and effectually modified scientifically, by using all the caution and precision and infinite patience of the truly scientific spirit, is a truth that is constantly ignored even by men and women of the loftiest and most humane nature. In such cases misdirected and uncontrolled sensibility ends in mournful waste of their own energy, in the certain disappointment of their own aims, and where such sensibility is backed by genius, eloquence, and a peculiar set of public conditions, in prolonged and fatal disturbance of society.

Rousseau was the great type of this triumphant and dangerous sophistry of the emotions. The Rousseau of his time for English-speaking nations was Thomas Carlyle. An apology is perhaps needed for mentioning a man of such simple, veracious, disinterested, and wholly high-minded life, in the same breath with one of the least sane men that ever lived. Community of method, like misery, makes men acquainted with strange bed-fellows. Two men of very different degrees of moral worth may notoriously both preach the same faith and both pursue the same method, and the method of Rousseau is the method of Carlyle. With each of them thought is an aspiration, and justice a sentiment, and society a retrogression. Each bids us look within our own bosoms for truth and right, postpones reason to feeling, and refers to introspection and a factitious something styled Nature, questions only to be truly solved by external observation and history. In connection with each of them has been exemplified the cruelty inherent in sentimentalism, when circumstances draw away the mask. Not the least conspicuous of the disciples of Rousseau was Robespierre. His works lay on the table of the Committee of Public Safety. The theory of the Reign of Terror was invented, and mercilessly reduced to practice, by men whom the visions of Rousseau had fired, and who were not afraid nor ashamed to wade through oceans of blood to the promised land of humanity and fine feeling. We in our days have seen the same result of sentimental doctrine in the barbarous love of the battlefield, the retrograde passion for methods of repression, the contempt for human life, the impatience of orderly and peaceful solution. We begin with introspection and the eternities, and end in blood and iron. Again, Rousseau's first piece was an anathema upon the science and art of his time, and a denunciation of books and speech. Carlyle, in exactly the same spirit, has denounced logic mills, warned us all away from literature, and habitually subordinated discipline of the intelligence to the passionate assertion of the will. There are passages in which he speaks respectfully of Intellect, but he is always careful to show that he is using the term in a special sense of his own, and confounding it with 'the exact summary of human *Worth*,' as in one place he defines it. Thus, instead of co-ordinating moral worthiness with intellectual energy, virtue with intelligence, right action of the will with scientific processes of the understanding, he has either placed one immeasurably below the other, or else has mischievously insisted on treating them as identical. The dictates of a kind heart are of superior force to the maxims of political economy; swift and peremptory resolution is a safer guide than a balancing judgment. If the will works easily and surely, we may assume the rectitude of the moving impulse. All this is no caricature of a system which sets sentiment, sometimes hard sentiment and sometimes soft sentiment, above reason and method.

In other words, the writer who in these days has done more than anybody else to fire men's hearts with a feeling for right and an eager desire for social activity, has with deliberate contempt thrust away from him the only instruments by which we can make sure what right is, and that our social action is wise and effective. A born poet, only wanting perhaps a clearer feeling for form and a more delicate spiritual self-possession, to have added another name to the illustrious catalogue of English singers, he has been driven by the impetuosity of his sympathies to attack the scientific side of social questions in an imaginative and highly emotional manner. Depth of benevolent feeling is unhappily no proof of fitness for handling complex problems, and a fine sense of the picturesque is no more a qualification for dealing effectively with the difficulties of an old society, than the composition of Wordsworth's famous sonnet on Westminster Bridge was any reason for supposing that the author would have made a competent Commissioner of Works.

Why should society, with its long and deep-hidden processes of growth, its innumerable intricacies and far-off historic complexities, be as an open book to any reader of its pages who brings acuteness and passion, but no patience nor calm accuracy of meditation? Objects of thought and observation far simpler, more free from all blinding and distorting elements, more accessible to direct and ocular inspection, are by rational consent reserved for the calmest and most austere moods and methods of human intelligence. Nor is denunciation of the conditions of a problem the quickest step towards solving it. Vituperation of the fact that supply and demand practically regulate certain kinds of bargain, is no contribution to systematic efforts to discover some more moral regulator. Take all the invective that Carlyle has poured out against political economy, the Dismal Science, and Gospel according to M'Croudy. Granting the absolute and entire inadequateness of political economy to sum up the laws and conditions of a healthy social state—and no one more than the present writer deplores the mischief which the application of the maxims of political economy by ignorant and selfish spirits has effected in confirming the worst tendencies of the commercial character—yet is it not a first condition of our being able to substitute better machinery for the ordinary rules of self-interest, that we know scientifically how those rules do and must operate? Again, in another field, it is well to cry out: 'Caitiff, we hate thee,' with a 'hatred, a hostility inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the scene of things.'[1] But this is slightly vague. It is not scientific. There are caitiffs and caitiffs. There is a more and a less of scoundrelism, as there is a more and a less of black annihilation, and we must have systematic jurisprudence, with its classification of caitiffs and its graduated blasting. Has Carlyle's passion, or have the sedulous and scientific labours of that Bentham, whose name with him is a symbol of evil, done most in what he calls the Scoundrel-province of Reform within the last half-century? Sterling's criticism on Teufelsdröckh told a hard but wholesome truth to Teufelsdröckh's creator. 'Wanting peace himself,' said Sterling, 'his fierce dissatisfaction fixes on all that is weak, corrupt, and imperfect around him; and instead of a calm and steady co-operation with all those who are endeavouring to apply the highest ideas as remedies for the worst evils, he holds himself in savage isolation.'[1]

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[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets.* II. Model Prisons, p. 92.

Carlyle assures us of Bonaparte that he had an instinct of nature better than his culture was, and illustrates it by the story that during the Egyptian expedition, when his scientific men were busy arguing that there could be no God, Bonaparte, looking up to the stars, confuted them decisively by saying: 'Very ingenious, Messieurs; but *who made* all that?' Surely the most inconclusive answer since coxcombs vanquished Berkeley with a grin. It is, however, a type of Carlyle's faith in the instinct of nature, as superseding the necessity for patient logical method; a faith, in other words, in crude and uninterpreted sense. Insight, indeed, goes far, but it no more entitles its possessor to dispense with reasoned discipline and system in treating scientific subjects, than it relieves him from the necessity of conforming to the physical conditions of health. Why should society be the one field of thought in which a man of genius is at liberty to assume all his major premisses, and swear all his conclusions?

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[1] Letter to Carlyle, in the *Life*, Pt. ii. ch. ii.

The deep unrest of unsatisfied souls meets its earliest solace in the effective and sympathetic expression of the same unrest from the lips of another. To look it in the face is the first approach to a sedative. To find our discontent with the actual, our yearning for an undefined ideal, our aspiration after impossible heights of being, shared and amplified in the emotional speech of a man of genius, is the beginning of consolation. Some of the most generous spirits a hundred years ago found this in the eloquence of Rousseau, and some of the most generous spirits of this time and place have found it in the writer of the *Sartor*. In ages not of faith, there will always be multitudinous troops of people crying for the moon. If such sorrowful pastime be ever permissible to men, it has been natural and lawful this long while in pre-revolutionary England, as it was natural and lawful a century since in pre-revolutionary France. A man born into a community where political forms, from the monarchy down to the popular chamber, are mainly hollow shams disguising the coarse supremacy of wealth, where religion is mainly official and political, and is ever too ready to dissever itself alike from the spirit of justice, the spirit of charity, and the spirit of truth, and where literature does not as a rule permit itself to discuss serious subjects frankly and worthily[1]—a community, in short, where the great aim of all classes and orders with power is by dint of rigorous silence, fast shutting of the eyes, and stern stopping of the ears, somehow to keep the social pyramid on its apex, with the fatal result of preserving for England its glorious fame as a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor—why, a man born into all this with a heart something softer than a flint, and with intellectual vision something more acute than that of a Troglodyte, may well be allowed to turn aside and cry for moons for a season.

Impotent unrest, however, is followed in Carlyle by what is socially an impotent solution, just as it was with Rousseau. To bid a man do his duty in one page, and then in the next to warn him sternly away from utilitarianism, from political economy, from all 'theories of the moral sense,' and from any other definite means of ascertaining what duty may chance to be, is but a bald and naked counsel. Spiritual nullity and material confusion in a society are not to be repaired by a transformation of egotism, querulous, brooding, marvelling, into egotism, active, practical, objective, not uncomplacent. The moral movements to which the instinctive impulses of humanity fallen on evil times uniformly give birth, early Christianity, for instance, or the socialism of Rousseau, may destroy a society, but they cannot save it unless in conjunction with organising policy. A thorough appreciation of fiscal and economic truths was at least as indispensable for the life of the Roman Empire as the acceptance of a Messiah; and it was only in the hands of a great statesman like Gregory VII. that Christianity became at last an instrument powerful enough to save civilisation. What the moral renovation of Rousseau did for France we all know. Now Rousseau's was far more profoundly social than the doctrine of Carlyle, which, while in name a renunciation of self, has all its foundations in the purest individualism. Rousseau, notwithstanding the method of *Émile*, treats man as a part of a collective whole, contracting manifold relations and owing manifold duties; and he always appeals to the love and sympathy which an imaginary God of nature has implanted in the heart. His aim is unity. Carlyle, following the same method of obedience to his own personal emotions, unfortified by patient reasoning, lands at the other extremity, and lays all his stress on the separatist instincts. The individual stands alone confronted by the eternities; between these and his own soul exists the one central relation. This has all the fundamental egotism of the doctrine of personal salvation, emancipated from fable, and varnished with an emotional phrase. The doctrine has been very widely interpreted, and without any forcing, as a religious expression for the conditions of commercial success.

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[1] Written in 1870.

If we look among our own countrymen, we find that the apostle of self-renunciation is nowhere so beloved as by the best of those whom steady self-reliance and thrifty self-securing and a firm eye to the main chance have got successfully on in the world. A Carlylean anthology, or volume of the master's sentences, might easily be composed, that should contain the highest form of private liturgy accepted by the best of the industrial classes, masters or men. They forgive or overlook the writer's denunciations of Beaver Industrialisms, which they attribute to his caprice or spleen. This is the worst of an emotional teacher, that people take only so much as they please from him, while with a reasoner they must either refute by reason, or else they must accept by reason, and not at simple choice. When trade is brisk, and England is successfully competing in the foreign markets, the books that enjoin silence and self-annihilation have a wonderful popularity in the manufacturing districts. This circumstance is honourable both to them and to him, as far as it goes, but it furnishes some reason for suspecting that our most vigorous moral reformer, so far from propelling us in new grooves, has in truth only given new firmness and coherency to tendencies that were strongly marked enough in the national character before. He has increased the fervour of the country, but without materially changing its objects ; there is all the less disguise among us as a result of his teaching, but no radical modification of the sentiments which people are sincere in. The most stirring general appeal to the emotions, to be effective for more than negative purposes, must lead up to definite maxims and specific precepts. As a negative renovation Carlyle's doctrine was perfect. It effectually put an end to the mood of Byronism. May we say that with the neutralisation of Byron, his most decisive and special work came to an end? May we not say further, that the true renovation of England, if such a process be ever feasible, will lie in a quite other method than this of emotion? It will lie not in more moral earnestness only, but in a more open intelligence; not merely in a more dogged resolution to work and be silent, but in a ready willingness to use the understanding. The poison of our sins, says Carlyle in one of his latest utterances, 'is not intellectual dimness chiefly, but torpid unveracity of heart.' Yes, but all unveracity, torpid or fervid, breeds intellectual dimness, and it is this last which prevents us from seeing a way out of the present ignoble situation. We need light more than heat; intellectual alertness, faith in the reasoning faculty, accessibility to new ideas. To refuse to use the intellect patiently and with system, to decline to seek scientific truth, to prefer effusive indulgence of emotion to the laborious and disciplined and candid exploration of new ideas, is not this, too, a torpid unveracity? And has not Carlyle, by the impatience of his method, done somewhat to deepen it?

It is very well to invite us to moral reform, to bring ourselves to be of heroic mind, as the surest way to 'the blessed Aristocracy of the Wisest.' But how shall we know the wisest when we see them, and how shall a nation know, if not by keen respect and watchfulness for intellectual truth and the teachers of it? Much as we may admire Carlyle's many gifts, and highly as we may revere his character, it is yet very doubtful whether anybody has as yet learnt from him the precious lesson of scrupulosity and conscientiousness in actively and constantly using the intelligence. This would have been the solid foundation of the true hero-worship.

Let thus much have been said on the head of temperament. The historic position also of every writer is an indispensable key to many things in his teaching.[1] We have to remember in Carlyle's case, that he was born in the memorable year when the French Revolution, in its narrower sense, was closed by the Whiff of Grape-shot, and when the great century of emancipation and illumination was ending darkly in battles and confusion. During his youth the reaction was in full flow, and the lamp had been handed to runners who not only reversed the ideas and methods, but even turned aside from the goal of their precursors. Hopefulness and enthusiastic confidence in humanity when freed from the fetters of spiritual superstition and secular tyranny, marked all the most characteristic and influential speculations of the two generations before '89. The appalling failure which attended the splendid attempt to realise these hopes in a renewed and perfected social structure, had no more than its natural effect in turning men's minds back, not to the past of Rousseau's imagination, but to the past of recorded history. The single epoch in the annals of Europe since the rise of Christianity, for which no good word could be found, was the epoch of Voltaire. The hideousness of the Christian church in the ninth and tenth centuries was passed lightly over by men who had only eyes for the moral obliquity of the church of the *Encyclopaedia.* The brilliant but profoundly inadequate essays on Voltaire and Diderot were the outcome in Carlyle of the same reactionary spirit. Nobody now, we may suppose, who is competent to judge, thinks that that estimate of 'the net product of the tumultuous Atheism' of Diderot and his fellow-workers, is a satisfactory account of the influence and significance of the *Encyclopaedia*; nor that to sum up Voltaire, with his burning passion for justice, his indefatigable humanity, his splendid energy in intellectual production, his righteous hatred of superstition, as merely a supreme master of *persiflage*, can be a process partaking of finality. The fact that to the eighteenth century belong the subjects of more than half of these thirty volumes, is a proof of the fascination of the period for an author who has never ceased to vilipend it. The saying is perhaps as true of these matters as of private relations, that hatred is not so far removed from love as indifference is. Be that as it may, the Carlylean view of the eighteenth century as a time of mere scepticism and unbelief, is now clearly untenable to men who remember the fervour of Jean Jacques, and the more rational, but not any less fervid faith of the disciples of Perfectibility. But this was not so clear in an earlier day, when the crash and dust of demolition had not so subsided as to let men see how much had risen up behind. The fire of the new school had been taken from the very conflagration which they execrated, but they were not held back from denouncing the eighteenth century by the reflection that, at any rate, its thought and action had made ready the way for much of what was best in the nineteenth.

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[1] The dates of Carlyle's principal compositions are these:—*Life of Schiller*, 1825; *Sartor Resartus*, 1831; *French Revolution*, 1837; *Chartism*, 1839; *Hero-Worship*, 1840; *Past and Present*, 1843; *Cromwell*, 1845; *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 1850; *Friedrich the Second*, 1858-1865; *Shooting Niagara*, 1867.

Carlyle himself has told us about Coleridge, and the movement of which Coleridge was the leader. That movement has led men in widely different ways. In one direction it has stagnated in the sunless swamps of a theosophy from which a cloud of sedulous ephemera still suck a little spiritual moisture. In another it led to the sacramental and sacerdotal developments of Anglicanism. In a third, among men with strong practical energy, to the benevolent bluster of a sort of Christianity which is called muscular because it is not intellectual. It would be an error to suppose that these and the other streams that have sprung from the same source, did not in the days of their fulness fertilise and gladden many lands. The wordy pietism of one school, the mimetic rites of another, the romping heroics of the third, are degenerate forms. How long they are likely to endure, it would be rash to predict among a nation whose established teachers and official preachers are prevented by an inveterate timidity from trusting themselves to that disciplined intelligence, in which the superior minds of the eighteenth century had such courageous faith.

Carlyle drank in some sort at the same fountain. Coleridgean ideas were in the air. It was there probably that he acquired that sympathy with the past, or with certain portions of the past, that feeling of the unity of history, and that conviction of the necessity of binding our theory of history fast with our theory of other things, in all of which he so strikingly resembles the great Anglican leaders of a generation ago, and in gaining some of which so strenuous an effort must have been needed to modify the prepossessions of a Scotch Puritan education. No one has contributed more powerfully to that movement which, drawing force from many and various sides, has brought out the difference between the historian and the gazetteer or antiquary. One half of *Past and Present* might have been written by one of the Oxford chiefs in the days of the Tracts. Vehement native force was too strong for such a man to remain in the luminous haze which made the Coleridgean atmosphere. A well-known chapter in the *Life of Sterling*, which some, indeed, have found too ungracious, shows how little hold he felt Coleridge's ideas to be capable of retaining, and how little permanent satisfaction resided in them. Coleridge, in fact, was not only a poet but a thinker as well; he had science of a sort as well as imagination, but it was not science for headlong and impatient souls. Carlyle was probably never able to endure a subdivision all his life, and the infinite ramifications of the central division between object and subject might well be with him an unprofitable weariness to the flesh.

In England, the greatest literary organ of the Revolution was unquestionably Byron, whose genius, daring, and melodramatic lawlessness exercised what now seems such an amazing fascination over the least revolutionary of European nations. Unfitted for scientific work and full of ardour, Carlyle found his mission in rushing with all his might to the annihilation of this terrible poet, who, like some gorgon, hydra, or chimera dire planted at the gate, carried off a yearly tale of youths and virgins from the city. In literature, only a revolutionist can thoroughly overpower a revolutionist. Carlyle had fully as much daring as Byron; his writing at its best, if without the many-eyed minuteness and sustained pulsing force of Byron, has still the full swell and tide and energy of genius: he is as lawless in his disrespect for some things established. He had the unspeakable advantage of being that which, though not in this sense, only his own favourite word of contempt describes, respectable; and, for another thing, of being ruggedly sincere. Carlylism is the male of Byronism. It is Byronism with thew and sinew, bass pipe and shaggy bosom. There is the same grievous complaint against the time and its men and its spirit, something even of the same contemptuous despair, the same sense of the puniness of man in the centre of a cruel and frowning universe; but there is in Carlylism a deliverance from it all, indeed the only deliverance possible. Its despair is a despair without misery. Labour in a high spirit, duty done, and right service performed in fortitudinous temper—here was, not indeed a way out, but a way of erect living within.

Against Byronism the ordinary moralist and preacher could really do nothing, because Byronism was an appeal that lay in the regions of the mind only accessible by one with an eye and a large poetic feeling for the infinite whole of things. It was not the rebellion only in *Manfred*, nor the wit in *Don Juan*, nor the graceful melancholy of *Childe Harold*, which made their author an idol, and still make him one to multitudes of Frenchmen and Germans and Italians. One prime secret of it is the air and spaciousness, the freedom and elemental grandeur of Byron. Who has not felt this to be one of the glories of Carlyle's work, that it, too, is large and spacious, rich with the fulness of a sense of things unknown and wonderful, and ever in the tiniest part showing us the stupendous and overwhelming whole? The magnitude of the universal forces enlarges the pettiness of man, and the smallness of his achievement and endurance takes a complexion of greatness from the vague immensity that surrounds and impalpably mixes with it.

Remember further, that while in Byron the outcome of this was rebellion, in Carlyle its outcome is reverence, a noble mood, which is one of the highest predispositions of the English character. The instincts of sanctification rooted in Teutonic races, and which in the corrupt and unctuous forms of a mechanical religious profession are so revolting, were mocked and outraged, where they were not superciliously ignored, in every line of the one, while in the other they were enthroned under the name of Worship, as the very key and centre of the right life. The prophet who never wearies of declaring that 'only in bowing down before the Higher does man feel himself exalted,' touched solemn organ notes, that awoke a response from dim religious depths, never reached by the stormy wailings of the Byronic lyre. The political side of the reverential sentiment is equally conciliated, and the prime business of individuals and communities pronounced to be the search after worthy objects of this divine quality of reverence. While kings' cloaks and church tippets are never spared, still less suffered to protect the dishonour of ignoble wearers of them, the inadequateness of aggression and demolition, the necessity of quiet order, the uncounted debt that we owe to rulers and to all sorts of holy and great men who have given this order to the world, all this brought repose and harmony into spirits that the hollow thunders of universal rebellion against tyrants and priests had worn into thinness and confusion. Again, at the bottom of the veriest *frondeur* with English blood in his veins, in his most defiant moment there lies a conviction that after all something known as common sense is the measure of life, and that to work hard is a demonstrated precept of common sense. Carlylism exactly hits this and brings it forward. We cannot wonder that Byronism was routed from the field.

It may have been in the transcendently firm and clear-eyed intelligence of Goethe that Carlyle first found a responsive encouragement to the profoundly positive impulses of his own spirit.[1] There is, indeed, a whole heaven betwixt the serenity, balance, and bright composure of the one, and the vehemence, passion, masterful wrath, of the other; and the vast, incessant, exact inquisitiveness of Goethe finds nothing corresponding to it in Carlyle's multitudinous contempt and indifference, sometimes express and sometimes only very significantly implied, for forms of intellectual activity that do not happen to be personally congenial. But each is a god, though the one sits ever on Olympus, while the other is as one from Tartarus. There is in each, besides all else, a certain remarkable directness of glance, an intrepid and penetrating quality of vision, which defies analysis. Occasional turgidity of phrase and unidiomatic handling of language do not conceal the simplicity of the process by which Carlyle pierces through obstruction down to the abstrusest depths. And the important fact is that this abstruseness is not verbal, any more than it is the abstruseness of fog and cloud. His epithet, or image, or trope, shoots like a sunbeam on to the matter, throwing a transfiguring light, even where it fails to pierce to its central core.

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[1] *Positive.* No English lexicon as yet seems to justify the use of this word in one of the senses of the French *positif*, as when a historian, for instance, speaks of the *esprit positif* of Bonaparte. We have no word, I believe, that exactly corresponds, so perhaps *positive* with that significance will become acclimatised. A distinct and separate idea of this particular characteristic is indispensable.

Eager for a firm foothold, yet wholly revolted by the too narrow and unelevated positivity of the eighteenth century; eager also for some recognition of the wide realm of the unknowable, yet wholly unsatisfied by the transcendentalism of the English and Scotch philosophic reactions, he found in Goethe that truly free and adequate positivity which accepts all things as parts of a natural or historic order, and while insisting on the recognition of the actual conditions of this order as indispensable, and condemning attempted evasions of such recognition as futile and childish, yet opens an ample bosom for all forms of beauty in art, and for all nobleness in moral aspiration. That Carlyle reached this high ground we do not say. Temperament kept him down from it. But it is after this that he has striven. The tumid nothingness of pure transcendentalism he has always abhorred. Some of Carlyle's favourite phrases have disguised from his readers the intensely practical turn of his whole mind. His constant presentation of the Eternities, the Immensities, and the like, has veiled his almost narrow adherence to plain record without moral comment, and his often cynical respect for the dangerous, yet, when rightly qualified and guided, the solid formula that What is, is. The Eternities and Immensities are only a kind of awful background. The highest souls are held to be deeply conscious of these vast unspeakable presences, yet even with them they are only inspiring accessories; the true interest lies in the practical attitude of such men towards the actual and palpable circumstances that surround them. This spirituality, whose place in Carlyle's teaching has been so extremely misstated, sinks wholly out of sight in connection with such heroes as the coarse and materialist Bonaparte, of whom, however, the hero-worshipper in earlier pieces speaks with some laudable misgiving, and the not less coarse and materialist Frederick, about whom no misgiving is permitted to the loyal disciple. The admiration for military methods, on condition that they are successful—for Carlyle, like Providence, is always on the side of big and victorious battalions—is the last outcome of a devotion to vigorous action and practical effect which no verbal garniture of a transcendental kind can hinder us from perceiving to be more purely materialist and unfeignedly brutal than anything which sprang from the reviled thought of the eighteenth century.

It is instructive to remark that another of the most illustrious enemies of that century and all its works, Joseph de Maistre, had the same admiration for the effectiveness of war, and the same extreme interest and concern in the men and things of war. He, too, declares that 'the loftiest and most generous sentiments are probably to be found in the soldier'; and that war, if terrible, is divine and splendid and fascinating, the manifestation of a sublime law of the universe. We must, however, do De Maistre the justice to point out, first, that he gave a measure of his strange interest in Surgery and Judgment, as Carlyle calls it, to the public executioner, a division of the honours of social surgery which is no more than fair; while, in the second place, he redeems the brutality of the military surgical idea after a fashion, by an extraordinary mysticism, which led him to see in war a divine, inscrutable force, determining success in a manner absolutely defying all the speculations of human reason.[1] The biographer of Frederick apparently finds no inscrutable force at all, but only will, tenacity, and powder kept dry. There is a vast difference between this and the absolutism of the mystic.

'Nature,' he says in one place, 'keeps silently a most exact Savings-bank, and official register correct to the most evanescent item, Debtor and Creditor, in respect to one and all of us; silently marks down, Creditor by such and such an unseen act of veracity and heroism; Debtor to such a loud blustery blunder, twenty-seven million strong or one unit strong, and to all acts and words and thoughts executed in consequence of that—Debtor, Debtor, Debtor, day after day, rigorously as Fate (for this *is* Fate that is writing); and at the end of the account you will have it all to pay, my friend.'[1]

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[1] *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg, 7ième entretien.*

That is to say, there is a law of recompense for communities of men, and as nations sow, even thus they reap. But what is Carlyle's account of the precise nature and operation of this law? What is the original distinction between an act of veracity and a blunder? Why was the blow struck by the Directory on the Eighteenth Fructidor a blunder, and that struck by Bonaparte on the Eighteenth Brumaire a veracity? What principle of registration is that which makes Nature debtor to Frederick the Second for the seizure of Silesia, and Bonaparte debtor to Nature for 'trampling on the world, holding it tyrannously down?' It is very well to tell us that 'Injustice pays itself with frightful compound interest,' but there are reasons for suspecting that Carlyle's definition of the just and the unjust are such as to reduce this and all his other sentences of like purport to the level of mere truism and repetition. If you secretly or openly hold that to be just and veracious which is successful, then it needs no further demonstration that penalties of ultimate failure are exacted for injustice, because it is precisely the failure that constitutes the injustice.

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[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, No. V. p. 247.

This is the kernel of all that is most retrograde in Carlyle's teaching. He identifies the physical with the moral order, confounds faithful conformity to the material conditions of success with loyal adherence to virtuous rule and principle, and then appeals to material triumph as the sanction of nature and the ratification of high heaven. Admiring with profoundest admiration the spectacle of an inflexible will, when armed with a long-headed insight into means and quantities and forces as its instrument, and yet deeply revering the abstract ideal of justice; dazzled by the methods and the products of iron resolution, yet imbued with traditional affection for virtue; he has seen no better way of conciliating both inclinations than by insisting that they point in the same direction, and that virtue and success, justice and victory, merit and triumph, are in the long run all one and the same thing. The most fatal of confusions. Compliance with material law and condition ensures material victory, and compliance with moral condition ensures moral triumph; but then moral triumph is as often as not physical martyrdom. Superior military virtues must unquestionably win the verdict of Fate, Nature, Fact, and Veracity, on the battlefield, but what then? Has Fate no other verdicts to record than these? and at the moment while she writes Nature down debtor to the conqueror, may she not also have written her down his implacable creditor for the moral cost of his conquest?

The anarchy and confusion of Poland were an outrage upon political conditions, which brought her to dependence and ruin. The manner of the partition was an outrage on moral conditions, for which each of the nations that profited by it paid in the lawlessness of Bonaparte. The preliminaries of Léoben, again, and Campo-Formio were the key to Waterloo and St. Helena. But Carlyle stops short at the triumph of compliance with the conditions of material victory. He is content to know that Frederick made himself master of Silesia, without considering that the day of Jena loomed in front. It suffices to say that the whiff of grape-shot on the Thirteenth Vendémiaire brought Sans-culottism to order and an end, without measuring what permanent elements of disorder were ineradicably implanted by resort to the military arm. Only the failures are used to point the great historical moral, and if Bonaparte had died in the Tuileries in all honour and glory, he would have ranked with Frederick or Francia as a wholly true man. Carlyle would then no more have declared the execution of Palm 'a palpable, tyrannous, murderous injustice,' than he declares it of the execution of Katte or Schlubhut. The fall of the traitor to fact, of the French monarchy, of the windbags of the first Republic, of Charles I., is improved for our edification, but then the other lesson, the failure of heroes like Cromwell, remains isolated and incoherent, with no place in a morally regulated universe. If the strength of Prussia now proves that Frederick had a right to seize Silesia, and relieves us from inquiring further whether he had any such right or not, why then should not the royalist assume, from the fact of the Restoration, and the consequent obliteration of Cromwell's work, that the Protector was a usurper and a phantasm captain?

Apart from its irreconcilableness with many of his most emphatic judgments, Carlyle's doctrine about Nature's registration of the penalties of injustice is intrinsically an anachronism. It is worse than the Catholic reaction, because while De Maistre only wanted Europe to return to the system of the twelfth century, Carlyle's theory of history takes us back to times prehistoric, when might and right were the same thing. It is decidedly natural that man in a state of nature should take and keep as much as his skill and physical strength enable him to do. But society and its benefits are all so much ground won from Nature and her state. The more natural a method of acquisition, the less likely is it to be social. The essence of morality is the subjugation of Nature in obedience to social needs. To use Kant's admirable description, concert *pathologically* extorted by the mere necessities of situation, is exalted into a *moral* union. It is exactly in this progressive substitution of one for the other that advancement consists, that Progress of the Species at which, in certain of its forms, Carlyle has so many gibes.

That, surely, is the true test of veracity and heroism in conduct. Does your hero's achievement go in the pathological or the moral direction? Does it tend to spread faith in that cunning, violence, force, which were once primitive and natural conditions of life, and which will still by natural law work to their own proper triumphs in so far as these conditions survive, and within such limits, and in such sense, as they permit; or, on the contrary, does it tend to heighten respect for civic law, for pledged word, for the habit of self-surrender to the public good, and for all those other ideas and sentiments and usages which have been painfully gained from the sterile sands of egotism and selfishness, and to which we are indebted for all the untold boons conferred by the social union on man?

Viewed from this point, the manner of the achievement is as important as is its immediate product, a consideration which it is one of Carlyle's most marked peculiarities to take into small account. Detesting Jesuitism from the bottom of his soul, he has been too willing to accept its fundamental maxim, that the end justifies the means. He has taken the end for the ratification or proscription of the means, and stamped it as the verdict of Fate and Fact on the transaction and its doer. A safer position is this, that the means prepare the end, and the end is what the means have made it. Here is the limit of the true law of the relations between man and fate. Justice and injustice in the law, let us abstain from inquiring after.

There are two sets of relations which have still to be regulated in some degree by the primitive and pathological principle of repression and main force. The first of these concern that unfortunate body of criminal and vicious persons, whose unsocial propensities are constantly straining and endangering the bonds of the social union. They exist in the midst of the most highly civilised communities, with all the predatory or violent habits of barbarous tribes. They are the active and unconquered remnant of the natural state, and it is as unscientific as the experience of some unwise philanthropy has shown it to be ineffective, to deal with them exactly as if they occupied the same moral and social level as the best of their generation. We are amply justified in employing towards them, wherever their offences endanger order, the same methods of coercion which originally made society possible. No tenable theory about free will or necessity, no theory of praise and blame that will bear positive tests, lays us under any obligation to spare either the comfort or the life of a man who indulges in certain anti-social kinds of conduct. Carlyle has done much to wear this just and austere view into the minds of his generation, and in so far he has performed an excellent service.

The second set of relations in which the pathological element still so largely predominates are those between nations. Separate and independent communities are still in a state of nature. The tie between them is only the imperfect, loose, and non-moral tie of self-interest and material power. Many publicists and sentimental politicians are ever striving to conceal this displeasing fact from themselves and others, and evading the lesson of the outbreaks that now and again convulse the civilised world. Carlyle's history of the rise and progress of the power of the Prussian monarchy is the great illustration of the hold he has of the conception of the international state as a state of nature; and here again, in so far as he has helped to teach us to study the past by historic methods, he has undoubtedly done laudable work.

Yet have we not to confess that there is another side to this kind of truth, in both these fields? We may finally pronounce on a given way of thinking, only after we have discerned its goal. Not knowing this, we cannot accurately know its true tendency and direction. Now, every recognition of the pathological necessity should imply a progress and effort towards its conversion into moral relationship. The difference between a reactionary and a truly progressive thinker or group of ideas is not that the one assumes virtuousness and morality as having been the conscious condition of international dealings, while the other asserts that such dealings were the lawful consequence of self-interest and the contest of material forces; nor is it that the one insists on viewing international transactions from the same moral point which would be the right one if independent communities actually formed one stable and settled family, while the other declines to view their morality at all. The vital difference is, that while the reactionary writer rigorously confines his faith within the region of facts accomplished, the other anticipates a time when the endeavour of the best minds in the civilised world, co-operating with every favouring external circumstance that arises, shall have in the international circle raised moral considerations to an ever higher and higher pre-eminence, and in internal conditions shall have left in the chances and training of the individual ever less and less excuse or grounds for a predisposition to anti-social and barbaric moods. This hopefulness, in some shape or other, is an indispensable mark of the most valuable thought. To stop at the soldier and the gibbet, and such order as they can furnish, is to close the eyes to the entire problem of the future, and we may be sure that what omits the future is no adequate nor stable solution of the present.

Carlyle's influence, however, was at its height before this idolatry of the soldier became a paramount article in his creed; and it is devoutly to be hoped that not many of those whom he first taught to seize before all things fact and reality, will follow him into this torrid air, where only forces and never principles are facts, and where nothing is reality but the violent triumph of arbitrarily imposed will. There was once a better side to it all, when the injunction to seek and cling to fact was a valuable warning not to waste energy and hope in seeking lights which it is not given to man ever to find, with a solemn assurance added that in frank and untrembling recognition of circumstance the spirit of man may find a priceless, ever-fruitful contentment. The prolonged and thousand-times repeated glorification of Unconsciousness, Silence, Renunciation, all comes to this: We are to leave the region of things unknowable, and hold fast to the duty that lies nearest. Here is the Everlasting Yea. In action only can we have certainty.

The reticences of men are often only less full of meaning than their most pregnant speech; and Carlyle's unbroken silence upon the modern validity and truth of religious creeds says much. The fact that he should have taken no distinct side in the great debate as to revelation, salvation, inspiration, and the other theological issues that agitate and divide a community where theology is now mostly verbal, has been the subject of some comment, and has had the effect of adding one rather peculiar side to the many varieties of his influence. Many in the dogmatic stage have been content to think that as he was not avowedly against them, he might be with them, and sacred persons have been known to draw their most strenuous inspirations from the chief denouncer of phantasms and exploded formulas. Only once, when speaking of Sterling's undertaking the clerical burden, does he burst out into unmistakable description of the old Jew stars that have now gone out, and wrath against those who would persuade us that these stars are still aflame and the only ones. That this reserve has been wise in its day, and has most usefully widened the tide and scope of the teacher's popularity, one need not dispute. There are conditions when indirect solvents are most powerful, as there are others, which these have done much to prepare, when no lover of truth will stoop to declarations other than direct. Carlyle has assailed the dogmatic temper in religion, and this is work that goes deeper than to assail dogmas.

Not even Comte himself has harder words for metaphysics than Carlyle. 'The disease of Metaphysics' is perennial. Questions of Death and Immortality, Origin of Evil, Freedom and Necessity, are ever appearing and attempting to shape something of the universe. 'And ever unsuccessfully: for what theorem of the Infinite can the Finite render complete? . . . Metaphysical Speculation as it begins in No or Nothingness, so it must needs end in nothingness; circulates and must circulate in endless vortices; creating, swallowing—itself.'[1] Again, on the other side, he sets his face just as firmly against the excessive pretensions and unwarranted certitudes of the physicist. 'The course of Nature's phases on this our little fraction of a Planet is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny and pebble, and quality and accident may have become familiar; but does the Minnow understand the Ocean tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's Eclipses, by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time to time (*un*-miraculously enough) be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and periodic Currents the mysterious course of Providence through Æons of Æons.'[1] The inalterable relativity of human knowledge has never been more forcibly illustrated; and the two passages together fix the limits of that knowledge with a sagacity truly philosophic. Between the vagaries of mystics and the vagaries of physicists lies the narrow land of rational certainty, relative, conditional, experimental, from which we view the vast realm that stretches out unknown before us, and perhaps for ever unknowable; inspiring men with an elevated awe, and environing the interests and duties of their little lives with a strange sublimity. 'We emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. . . . But whence? O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery.'[2]

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[1] 'Characteristics,' *Misc. Ess.*, iii. pp. 356-358. Rousseau in the same way makes the Savoyard Vicar declare that '*jamais le jargon de la métaphysique n'a fait découvrir une seule vérité, et il a rempli la philosophie d'absurdités dont on a honte, sitôt qu'on les dépouille de leurs grands mots.*'—*Emile*, liv. iv.

Natural Supernaturalism, the title of one of the cardinal chapters in Carlyle's cardinal book, is perhaps as good a name as another for this two-faced yet integral philosophy, which teaches us to behold with cheerful serenity the great gulf fixed round our faculty and existence on every side, while it fills us with that supreme sense of countless unseen possibilities, and of the hidden, undefined movements of shadow and light over the spirit, without which the soul of man falls into hard and desolate sterility. In youth, perhaps, it is the latter aspect of Carlyle's teaching which first touches people, because youth is the time of indefinite aspiration; and it is easier, besides, to surrender ourselves passively to these vague emotional impressions, than to apply actively and contentedly to the duty that lies nearest, and to the securing of 'that infinitesimallest product' on which the teacher is ever insisting, It is the Supernaturalism which stirs men first, until larger fulness of years and wider experience of life draw them to a wise and not inglorious acquiescence in Naturalism. This last is the mood which Carlyle never wearies of extolling and enjoining under the name of Belief; and the absence of it, the inability to enter into it, is that Unbelief which he so bitterly vituperates, or, in another phrase, that Discontent which he charges with holding the soul in such desperate and paralysing bondage.

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[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. iii. ch. viii. p. 249.

[2] *Ib.* p. 257.

Indeed, what is it that Carlyle urges upon us but the search for that Mental Freedom, which under one name or another has been the goal and ideal of all highest minds that have reflected on the true constitution of human happiness? His often enjoined Silence is the first condition of this supreme kind of liberty, for what is silence but the absence of a self-tormenting assertiveness, the freedom from excessive susceptibility under the speech of others, one's removal from the choking sandy wilderness of wasted words? Belief is the mood which emancipates us from the paralysing dubieties of distraught souls, and leaves us full possession of ourselves by furnishing an unshaken and inexpugnable base for action and thought, and subordinating passion to conviction. Labour, again, perhaps the cardinal article in the creed, is at once the price of moral independence, and the first condition of that fulness and accuracy of knowledge, without which we are not free, but the bounden slaves of prejudice, unreality, darkness, and error. Even Renunciation of self is in truth only the casting out of those disturbing and masterful qualities which oppress and hinder the free, natural play of the worthier parts of character. In renunciation we thus restore to self its own diviner mind.

Yet we are never bidden either to strive or hope for a freedom that is unbounded. Circumstance has fixed limits that no effort can transcend. Novalis complained in bitter words, as we know, of the mechanical, prosaic, utilitarian, cold-hearted character of *Wilhelm Meister*, constituting it an embodiment of 'artistic Atheism,' while English critics as loudly found fault with its author for being a mystic. Exactly the same discrepancy is possible in respect of

Carlyle's own writings. In one sense he may be called mystic and transcendental, in another baldly mechanical and even cold-hearted, just as Novalis found Goethe to be in *Meister*. The latter impression is inevitable in all who, like Goethe and like Carlyle, make a lofty acquiescence in the positive course of circumstance a prime condition at once of wise endeavour and of genuine happiness. The splendid fire and unmeasured vehemence of Carlyle's manner partially veil the depth of this acquiescence, which is really not so far removed from fatalism. The torrent of his eloquence, bright and rushing as it is, flows between rigid banks and over hard rocks. Devotion to the heroic does not prevent the assumption of a tone towards the great mass of the unheroic, which implies that they are no more than two-legged mill horses, ever treading a fixed and unalterable round. He practically denies other consolation to mortals than such as they may be able to get from the final and conclusive Kismet of the oriental. It is fate. Man is the creature of his destiny. As for our supposed claims on the heavenly powers: What right, he asks, hadst thou even to be? Fatalism of this stamp is the natural and unavoidable issue of a born positivity of spirit, uninformed by scientific meditation. It exists in its coarsest and most childish kind in adventurous freebooters of the type of Napoleon, and in a noble and not egotistic kind in Oliver Cromwell's pious interpretation of the order of events by the good will and providence of God.

Two conspicuous qualities of Carlylean doctrine flow from this fatalism, or poetised utilitarianism, or illumined positivity. One of them is a tolerably constant contempt for excessive nicety in moral distinctions, and an aversion to the monotonous attitude of praise and blame. In a country overrun and corroded to the heart, as Great Britain is, with cant and a foul mechanical hypocrisy, this temper ought to have had its uses in giving a much-needed robustness to public judgment. One might suppose, from the tone of opinion among us, not only that the difference between right and wrong marks the most important aspect of conduct, which would be true; but that it marks the only aspect of it that exists, or that is worth considering, which is most profoundly false. Nowhere has Puritanism done us more harm than in thus leading us to take all breadth, and colour, and diversity, and fine discrimination, out of our judgments of men, reducing them to thin, narrow, and superficial pronouncements upon the letter of their morality, or the precise conformity of their opinions to accepted standards of truth, religious or other. Among other evils which it has inflicted, this inability to conceive of conduct except as either right or wrong, and, correspondingly in the intellectual order, of teaching except as either true or false, is at the bottom of that fatal spirit of *parti-pris* which has led to the rooting of so much injustice, disorder, immobility, and darkness in English intelligence. No excess of morality, we may be sure, has followed this excessive adoption of the exclusively moral standard. '*Quand il n'y a plus de principes dans le cœur,*' says De Sénancour, '*on est bien scrupuleux sur les apparences publiques et sur les devoirs d'opinion.*' We have simply got for our pains a most unlovely leanness of judgment, and ever since the days when this temper set in until now, when a wholesome rebellion is afoot, it has steadily and powerfully tended to straiten character, to make action mechanical, and to impoverish art. As if there were nothing admirable in a man save unbroken obedience to the letter of the moral law, and that letter read in our own casual and local interpretation; and as if we had no faculties of sympathy, no sense for the beauty of character, no feeling for broad force and full-pulsing vitality.

To study manners and conduct and men's moral nature in such a way, is as direct an error as it would be to overlook in the study of his body everything except its vertebral column and the bony framework. The body is more than mere anatomy. A character is much else besides being virtuous or vicious. In many of the characters in which some of the finest and most singular qualities of humanity would seem to have reached their farthest height, their morality was the side least worth discussing. The same may be said of the specific rightness or wrongness of opinion in the intellectual order. Let us condemn error or immorality, when the scope of our criticism calls for this particular function, but why rush to praise or blame, to eulogy or reprobation, when we should do better simply to explore and enjoy? Moral imperfection is ever a grievous curtailment of life, but many exquisite flowers of character, many gracious and potent things, may still thrive in the most disordered scene.

The vast waste which this limitation of prospect entails is the most grievous rejection of moral treasure, if it be true that nothing enriches the nature like wide sympathy and many-coloured appreciativeness. To a man like Macaulay, for example, criticism was only a tribunal before which men were brought to be decisively tried by one or two inflexible tests, and then sent to join the sheep on the one hand, or the goats on the other. His pages are the record of sentences passed, not the presentation of human characters in all their fulness and colour; and the consequence is that even now and so soon, in spite of all their rhetorical brilliance, their hold on men has grown slack. Contrast the dim depths into which his essay on Johnson is receding, with the vitality as of a fine dramatic creation which exists in Carlyle's essay on the same man. Carlyle knows as well as Macaulay how blind and stupid a creed was English Toryism a century ago, but he seizes and reproduces the character of his man, and this was much more than a matter of creed. So with Burns. He was drunken and unchaste and thriftless, and Carlyle holds all these vices as deeply in reprobation as if he had written ten thousand sermons against them; but he leaves the fulmination to the hack moralist of the pulpit or the press, with whom words are cheap, easily gotten, and readily thrown forth. To him it seems better worth while, having made sure of some sterling sincerity and rare genuineness of vision and singular human quality, to dwell on, and do justice to that, than to accumulate commonplaces as to the viciousness of vice. Here we may perhaps find the explanation of the remarkable fact that though Carlyle has written about a large number of men of all varieties of opinion and temperament, and written with emphasis and point and strong feeling, yet there is hardly one of these judgments, however much we may dissent from it, which we could fairly put a finger upon as indecently absurd or futile. Of how many writers of thirty volumes can we say the same?

That this broad and poetic temper of criticism has special dangers, and needs to have special safeguards, is but too true. Even, however, if we find that it has its excesses, we may forgive much to the merits of a reaction against a system which has raised monstrous floods of sour cant round about us, and hardened the hearts and parched the sympathies of men by blasts from theological deserts. There is a point of view so lofty and so peculiar that from it we are able to discern in men and women something more than, and apart from, creed and profession and formulated principle; which indeed directs and colours this creed and principle as decisively as it is in its turn acted on by them, and this is their character or humanity. The least important thing about Johnson is that he was a Tory, and about Burns, that he drank too much and was incontinent; and if we see in modern literature an increasing tendency to mount to this higher point of view, this humaner prospect, there is no living writer to whom we owe more for it than Carlyle. The same principle which revealed the valour and godliness of Puritanism, has proved its most efficacious solvent, for it places character on the pedestal where Puritanism places dogma.

The second of the qualities which seem to flow from Carlyle's fatalism, and one much less useful among such a people as the English, is a deficiency of sympathy with masses of men. It would be easy enough to find places where he talks of the dumb millions in terms of fine and sincere humanity, and his feeling for the common pathos of the human lot, as he encounters it in individual lives, is as earnest and as simple, as it is invariably lovely and touching in its expression. But detached passages cannot counterbalance the effect of a whole compact body of teaching. The multitude stands between Destiny on the one side, and the Hero on the other; a sport to the first, and as potter's clay to the second. '*Dogs, would ye then live for ever?*' Frederick is truly or fabulously said to have cried to a troop who hesitated to attack a battery vomiting forth death and destruction. This is a measure of Carlyle's own valuation of the store we ought to set on the lives of the most. We know in what coarse outcome such an estimate of the dignity of other life than the life heroic has practically issued; in what barbarous vindication of barbarous law-breaking in Jamaica, in what inhuman softness for slavery, in what contemptuous and angry words for 'Beales and his 50,000 roughs,' contrasted with gentle words for our precious aristocracy, with 'the politest and gracefullest kind of woman' to wife. Here is the end of the Eternal Verities, when one lets them bulk so big in his eyes as to shut out that perishable speck, the human race.

'They seem to have seen, these brave old Northmen,' he says in one place, 'what Meditation has taught all men in all ages, that this world is after all but a show—a phenomenon or appearance, no real thing. All deep souls see into that.'[1] Yes; but deep souls dealing with the practical questions of society, do well to thrust the vision as far from them as they can, and to suppose that this world is no show, and happiness and misery not mere appearances, but the keenest realities that we can know. The difference between virtue and vice, between wisdom and folly, is only phenomenal, yet there is difference enough. '*What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!*' Burke cried in the presence of an affecting incident. Yet the consciousness of this made him none the less careful, minute, patient, systematic, in examining a policy, or criticising a task. Carlyle, on the contrary, falls back on the same reflection for comfort in the face of political confusions and difficulties and details, which he has not the moral patience to encounter scientifically. Unable to dream of swift renovation and wisdom among men, he ponders on the unreality of life, and hardens his heart against generations that will not know the things pertaining unto their peace. He answers to one lifting up some moderate voice of protest in favour of the masses of mankind, as his Prussian hero did: '*Ah, you do not know that damned race!*'[1]

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[1] *Hero-Worship*, p. 43.

There is no passage which Carlyle so often quotes as the sublime—

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

If the ever present impression of this awful, most moving, yet most soothing thought, be a law of spiritual breadth and height, there is still a peril in it. Such an impression may inform the soul with a devout mingled sense of grandeur and nothingness, or it may blacken into cynicism and antinomian living for self and the day. It may be a solemn and holy refrain, sounding far off but clear in the dusty course of work and duty; or it may be the comforting chorus of a diabolic drama of selfishness and violence. As a reaction against religious theories which make humanity over-abound in self-consequence, and fill individuals with the strutting importance of creatures with private souls to save or lose, even such cynicism as Byron's was wholesome and nearly forgivable. Nevertheless, the most important question that we can ask of any great teacher, as of the walk and conversation of any commonest person, remains this—how far has he strengthened and raised the conscious and harmonious dignity of humanity; how stirred in men and women, many or few, deeper and more active sense of the worth and obligation and innumerable possibilities, not of their own little lives, one or another, but of life collectively; how heightened the self-respect of the race? There is no need to plant oneself in a fool's paradise, with no eye for the weakness of men, the futility of their hopes, the irony of their fate, the dominion of the satyr and the tiger in their hearts. Laughter has a fore-place in life. All this we may see and show that we see, and yet so throw it behind the weightier facts of nobleness and sacrifice, of the boundless gifts which fraternal union has given, and has the power of giving, as to kindle in every breast, not callous to exalted impressions, the glow of sympathetic endeavour, and of serene exultation in the bond that makes 'precious the soul of man to man.'

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[1] Carlyle's *Frederick*, vi. 363.

This renewal of moral energy by spiritual contact with the mass of men, and by meditation on the destinies of mankind, is the very reverse of Carlyle's method. With him, it is good to leave the mass, and fall down before the individual, and be saved by him. The victorious hero is the true Paraclete. 'Nothing so lifts a man from all his mean imprisonments, were it but for moments, as true admiration.' And this is really the kernel of the Carlylean doctrine. The whole human race toils and moils, straining and energising, doing and suffering things multitudinous and unspeakable under the sun, in order that like the aloe-tree it may once in a hundred years produce a flower. It is this hero that age offers to age, and the wisest worship him. Time and nature once and again distil from out of the lees and froth of common humanity some wondrous character, of a potent and reviving property hardly short of miraculous. This the man who knows his own good cherishes in his inmost soul as a sacred thing, an elixir of moral life. The Great Man is 'the light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world; a flowing light fountain, in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them.' This is only another form of the anthropomorphic conceptions of deity. The divinity of the ordinary hierophant is clothed in the minds of the worshippers with the highest human qualities they happen to be capable of conceiving, and this is the self-acting machinery by which worship refreshes and recruits what is best in man. Carlyle has another way. He carries the process a step farther, giving back to the great man what had been taken for beings greater than any man, and summoning us to trim the lamp of endeavour at the shrine of heroic chiefs of mankind. In that house there are many mansions, the boisterous sanctuary of a vagabond polytheism. But each altar is individual and apart, and the reaction of this isolation upon the egotistic instincts of the worshipper has been only too evident. It is good for us to build temples to great names which recall special transfigurations of humanity; but it is better still, it gives a firmer nerve to purpose and adds a finer holiness to the ethical sense, to carry ever with us the unmarked, yet living tradition of the voiceless unconscious effort of unnumbered millions of souls, flitting lightly away like showers of thin leaves, yet ever augmenting the elements of perfectness in man, and exalting the eternal contest.

Carlyle has indeed written that generation stands indissolubly woven with generation; 'how we inherit, not Life only, but all the garniture and form of Life, and work and speak, and even think and feel, as our fathers and primeval grandfathers from the beginning have given it to us;' how 'mankind is a living, indivisible whole.'[1] Even this, however, with the 'literal communion of saints,' which follows in connection with it, is only a detached suggestion, not incorporated with the body of the writer's doctrine. It does not neutralise the general lack of faith in the cultivable virtue of masses of men, nor the universal tone of humoristic cynicism with which all but a little band, the supposed salt of the earth, are treated. Man is for Carlyle, as for the Calvinistic theologian, a fallen and depraved being, without much hope, except for a few of the elect. The best thing that can happen to the poor creature is that he should be thoroughly well drilled. In other words, society does not really progress in its bulk; and the methods which were conditions of the original formation and growth of the social union, remain indispensable until the sound of the last trump. Was there not a profound and far-reaching truth wrapped up in Goethe's simple yet really inexhaustible monition, that if we would improve a man, it were well to let him believe that we already think him that which we would have him to be? The law that *noblesse oblige* has unwritten bearings in dealing with all men; all masses of men are susceptible of an appeal from that point: for this Carlyle seems to make no allowance.

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[1] 'Organic Filaments' in the *Sartor*, Bk. iii. ch. vii.

Every modification of society is one of the slow growths of time, and to hurry impatiently after them by swift ways of military discipline and peremptory law-making, is only to clasp the near and superficial good. It is easy to make a solitude and call it peace, to plant an iron heel and call it order. But read Carlyle's essay on Dr. Francia, and then ponder the history of Paraguay for these later years and the accounts of its condition in the newspapers of to-day. 'Nay, it may be,' we learn from that remarkable piece, 'that the benefit of him is not even yet exhausted, even yet entirely become visible. Who knows but, in unborn centuries, Paragueno men will look back to their lean iron Francia, as men do in such cases to the one veracious person, and institute considerations?'[1] Who knows, indeed, if only it prove that their lean iron Francia, in his passion for order and authority, did not stamp out the very life of the nation? Where organic growths are concerned, patience is the sovereign law; and where the organism is a society of men, the vital principle is a sense in one shape or another of the dignity of humanity. The recognition of this tests the distinction between the truly heroic ruler of the stamp of Cromwell, and the arbitrary enthusiast for external order like Frederick. Yet in more than one place Carlyle accepts the fundamental principle of democracy. 'It is curious to consider now,' he says once, 'with what fierce, deep-breathed doggedness the poor English Nation, drawn by their instincts, held fast upon it [the Spanish War of Walpole's time, in Jenkins' Ear Question], and would take no denial of it, as if they had surmised and seen. For the instincts of simple, guileless persons (liable to be counted stupid by the unwary) are sometimes of prophetic nature, and spring from the deep places of this universe!'[1] If the writer of this had only thought it out to the end, and applied the conclusions thereof to history and politics, what a difference it would have made.

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[1] *Misc. Ess.* vi. 124.

No criticism upon either Carlyle or any other modern historian, possessed of speculative quality, would be in any sense complete which should leave out of sight his view of the manner and significance of the break-up of the old European structure. The historian is pretty sure to be guided in his estimate of the forces which have contributed to dissolution in the past, by the kind of anticipation which he entertains of the probable course of reconstruction. Like Comte, in his ideas of temporal reconstruction, Carlyle goes back to something like the forms of feudalism for the model of the industrial organisation of the future; but in the spiritual order he is as far removed as possible from any semblance of that revival of the old ecclesiastical forms without the old theological ideas, which is the corner-stone of Comte's edifice. To the question whether mankind gained or lost by the French Revolution, Carlyle nowhere gives a clear answer; indeed, on this subject more even than any other, he clings closely to his favourite method of simple presentation, streaked with dramatic irony. No writer shows himself more alive to the enormous moment to all Europe of that transaction; but we hear no word from him on the question whether we have more reason to bless or curse an event that interrupted, either subsequently to retard or to accelerate, the transformation of the West from a state of war, of many degrees of social subordination, of religious privilege, of aristocratic administration, into a state of peaceful industry, of equal international rights, of social equality, of free and equal tolerance of creeds. That this process was going on prior to 1789 is undeniable. Are we really nearer to the permanent establishment of the new order, for what was done between 1789 and 1793? or were men thrown off the right track of improvement by a movement which turned exclusively on abstract rights, which dealt with men's ideas and habits as if they were instantaneously pliable before the aspirations of any government, and which by its violent and inconsiderate methods drove all those who should only have been friends of order into being the enemies of progress as well? There are many able and honest and republican men who in their hearts suspect that the latter of the two alternatives is the more correct description of what has happened. Carlyle is as one who does not hear the question. He draws its general moral lesson from the French Revolution, and with clangorous note warns all whom it concerns, from king to churl, that imposture must come to an end. But for the precise amount and kind of dissolution which the West owes to it, for the political meaning of it, as distinguished from its moral or its dramatic significance, we seek in vain, finding no word on the subject, nor even evidence of consciousness that such word is needed.

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[1] *Frederick*, iv. 390.

The truth is that with Carlyle the Revolution begins not in 1789 but in 1741; not with the Fall of the Bastille but with the Battle of Mollwitz. This earliest of Frederick's victories was the first sign 'that indeed a new hour had struck on the Time Horologe, that a new Epoch had arisen. Slumberous Europe, rotting amid its blind pedantries, its lazy hypocrisies, conscious and unconscious: this man is capable of shaking it a little out of its stupid refuges of lies and ignominious wrappages, and of intimating to it afar off that there is still a Veracity in Things, and a Mendacity in Sham Things,' and so forth, in the well-known strain.[1] It is impossible to overrate the truly supreme importance of the violent break-up of Europe which followed the death of the Emperor Charles VI., and in many respects 1740 is as important a date in the history of Western societies as 1789. Most of us would probably find the importance of this epoch in its destructive contribution, rather than in that constructive and moral quality which lay under the movement of '89. The Empire was thoroughly shattered. France was left weak, impoverished, humiliated. Spain was finally thrust from among the efficient elements in the European State-system. Most important of all, their too slight sanctity had utterly left the old conceptions of public law and international right. The whole polity of Europe was left in such a condition of disruption as had not been equalled since the death of Charles the Great. The Partition of Poland was the most startling evidence of the completeness of this disruption, and if one statesman was more to be praised or blamed for shaking over the fabric than another, that statesman was Frederick the Second of Prussia. But then, in Carlyle's belief, there was equally a constructive and highly moral side to all this. The old fell to pieces because it was internally rotten. The gospel of the new was that the government of men and kingdoms is a business beyond all others demanding an open-eyed accessibility to all facts and realities; that here more than anywhere else you need to give the tools to him who can handle them; that government does by no means go on of itself, but more than anything else in this world demands skill, patience, energy, long and tenacious grip, and the constant presence of that most indispensable, yet most rare, of all practical convictions, that the effect is the inevitable consequent of the cause. Here was a revolution, we cannot doubt. The French Revolution was in a manner a complement to it, as Carlyle himself says in a place where he talks of believing both in the French Revolution and in Frederick; 'that is to say both that Real Kingship is eternally indispensable, and also that the destruction of Sham Kingship (a frightful process) is occasionally so.'[1] It is curious that an observer who could see the positive side of Frederick's disruption of Europe in 1740, did not also see that there was a positive side to the disruption of the French monarchy fifty years afterwards, and that not only was a blow dealt to sham kingship, but a decisive impulse was given to those ideas of morality and justice in government, upon which only real kingship in whatever form is able to rest.

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[1] *History of Frederick the Great,* iv. 328. See also vol. i., Proem.

As to the other great factor in the dissolution of the old state, the decay of ancient spiritual forms, Carlyle gives no uncertain sound. Of the Reformation, as of the French Revolution, philosophers have doubted how far it really contributed to the stable progress of European civilisation. Would it have been better, if it had been possible, for the old belief gradually as by process of nature to fall to pieces, new doctrine as gradually and as normally emerging from the ground of disorganised and decayed convictions, without any of that frightful violence which stirred men's deepest passions, and gave them a sinister interest in holding one or other of the rival creeds in its most extreme, exclusive, and intolerant form? This question Carlyle does not see, or, if he does see it, he rides roughshod over it. Every reader remembers the notable passage in which he declares that the question of Protestant or not Protestant meant everywhere, 'Is there anything of nobleness in you, O Nation, or is there nothing?' and that afterwards it fared with nations as they did, or did not, accept this sixteenth-century form of Truth when it came.[1]

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[1] *Frederick the Great,* i. 9.

France, for example, is the conspicuous proof of what overtook the deniers. 'France saw good to massacre Protestantism, and end it, in the night of St. Bartholomew, 1572. The celestial apparitor of heaven's chancery, so we may speak, the genius of Fact and Veracity, had left his writ of summons; writ was read and replied to in this manner.' But let us look at this more definitely. A complex series of historic facts do not usually fit so neatly into the moral formula. The truth surely is that while the anxieties and dangers of the Catholic party in France increased after St. Bartholomew, whose dramatic horror has made its historic importance to be vastly exaggerated, the Protestant cause remained full of vitality, and the number of its adherents went on increasing until the Edict of Nantes. It is eminently unreasonable to talk of France seeing good to end Protestantism in a night, when we reflect that twenty-six years after, the provisions of the Edict of Nantes were what they were. 'By that Edict,' the historian tells us, 'the French Protestants, who numbered perhaps a tenth of the total population, 2,000,000 out of 20,000,000, obtained absolute liberty of conscience; performance of public worship in 3500 castles, as well as in certain specified houses in each province; a State endowment equal to £20,000 a year; civil rights equal in every respect to those of the Catholics; admission to the public colleges, hospitals, etc.; finally, eligibility to all offices of State.' It was this, and not the Massacre, which was France's reply to the Genius of Fact and Veracity. Again, on the other side, England accepted Protestantism, and yet Carlyle, of all men, could hardly pretend, after his memorable deliverances in the *Niagara*, that he thought she had fared particularly well in consequence.

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[1] *Frederick*, i. Bk. iii. ch. viii. 269-274.

The famous diatribe against Jesuitism in the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*,[1] one of the most unfeignedly coarse and virulent bits of invective in the language, points plumb in the same direction. It is grossly unjust, because it takes for granted that Loyola and all Jesuits were deliberately conscious of imposture and falsehood, knowingly embraced the cause of Beelzebub, and resolutely propagated it. It is one thing to judge a system in its corruption, and a quite other thing to measure the worth and true design of its first founders; one thing to estimate the intention and sincerity of a movement, when it first stirred the hearts of men, and another thing to pass sentence upon it in the days of its degradation. The vileness into which Jesuitism eventually sank is a poor reason why we should malign and curse those who, centuries before, found in the rules and discipline and aims of that system an acceptable expression for their own disinterested social aspirations. It is childish to say that the subsequent vileness is a proof of the existence of an inherent corrupt principle from the beginning; because hitherto certainly, and probably it will be so for ever, even the most salutary movements and most effective social conceptions have been provisional. In other words, the ultimate certainty of dissolution does not nullify the beauty and strength of physical life, and the putrescence of Jesuit methods and ideas is no more a reproach to those who first found succour in them, than the cant and formalism of any other degenerate form of active faith, say monachism or Calvinism, prove Calvin or Benedict or Bernard to have been hypocritical and hollow. To be able, however, to take this reasonable view, one must be unable to believe that men can be drawn for generation after generation by such a mere hollow lie and villainy and 'light of hell' as Jesuitism has always been, according to Carlyle's rendering. Human nature is not led for so long by lies; and if it seems to be otherwise, let us be sure that ideas which do lead and attract successive generations of men to self-sacrifice and care for social interests, must contain something which is not wholly a lie.

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[1] No. VIII. pp. 353-371.

Perhaps it is pertinent to remember that Carlyle, in fact, is a prophet with a faith, and he holds the opposition kind of religionist in a peculiarly theological execration. In spite of his passion for order, he cannot understand the political point of view. The attempts of good men in epochs of disorder to remake the past, to bring back an old spiritual system and method, because that did once at any rate give shelter to mankind, and peradventure may give it to them again until better times come, are phenomena into which he cannot look with calm or patience. The great reactionist is a type that is wholly dark to him. That a reactionist can be great, can be a lover of virtue and truth, can in any sort contribute to the welfare of men, these are possibilities to which he will lend no ear. In a word, he is a prophet and not a philosopher, and it is fruitless to go to him for help in the solution of philosophic problems. This is not to say that he may not render us much help in those far more momentous problems which affect the guidance of our own lives.

BYRON.[1]

It is one of the singular facts in the history of literature, that the most rootedly conservative country in Europe should have produced the poet of the Revolution. Nowhere is the antipathy to principles and ideas so profound, nor the addiction to moderate compromise so inveterate, nor the reluctance to advance away from the past so unconquerable, as in England; and nowhere in England is there so settled an indisposition to regard any thought or sentiment except in the light of an existing social order, nor so firmly passive a hostility to generous aspirations, as in the aristocracy. Yet it was precisely an English aristocrat who became the favourite poet of all the most high-minded conspirators and socialists of continental Europe for half a century; of the best of those, that is to say, who have borne the most unsparing testimony against the present ordering of society, and against the theological and moral conceptions which have guided and maintained it. The rank and file of the army has been equally inspired by the same fiery and rebellious strains against the order of God and the order of man.

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[1] 1887.

'The day will come,' wrote Mazzini, thirty years ago, 'when Democracy will remember all that it owes to Byron. England, too, will, I hope, one day remember the mission—so entirely English yet hitherto overlooked by her—which Byron fulfilled on the Continent; the European rôle given by him to English literature, and the appreciation and sympathy for England which he awakened amongst us. Before he came, all that was known of English literature was the French translation of Shakespeare, and the anathema hurled by Voltaire against the "drunken savage." It is since Byron that we Continentalists have learned to study Shakespeare and other English writers. From him dates the sympathy of all the true-hearted amongst us for this land of liberty, whose true vocation he so worthily represented among the oppressed. He led the genius of Britain on a pilgrimage throughout all Europe.'[1]

The day of recollection has not yet come. It is only in his own country that Byron's influence has been a comparatively superficial one, and its scope and gist dimly and imperfectly caught, because it is only in England that the partisans of order hope to mitigate or avoid the facts of the Revolution by pretending not to see them, while the friends of progress suppose that all the fruits of change shall inevitably fall, if only they keep the forces and processes and extent of the change rigorously private and undeclared. That intense practicalness which seems to have done so many great things for us, and yet at the same moment mysteriously to have robbed us of all, forbids us even to cast a glance at what is no more than an aspiration. Englishmen like to be able to answer about the Revolution as those ancients answered about the symbol of another Revolution, when they said that they knew not so much as whether there were a Holy Ghost or not. The same want of kindling power in the national intelligence which made of the English Reformation one of the most sluggish and tedious chapters in our history, has made the still mightier advance of the moderns from the social system and spiritual bases of the old state, in spite of our two national achievements of punishing a king with death and emancipating our slaves, just as unimpressive and semi-efficacious a performance in this country as the more affrontingly hollow and halt-footed transactions of the sixteenth century.

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[1] See also George Sand's Preface to *Obermann*, p. 10. '*En même temps que les institutions et les coutumes, la littérature anglaise passa le détroit, et vint régner chez nous. La poésie britannique nous révéla le doute incarné sous la figure de Byron; puis la littérature allemande, quoique plus mystique, nous conduisit au même résultat par un sentiment de rêverie plus profond.*'

The number of translations that have appeared in Germany since 1830 proves the coincidence of Byronic influence with revolutionary movement in that country.

Just because it was wonderful that England should have produced Byron, it would have been wonderful if she had received any permanently deep impression from him, or preserved a lasting appreciation of his work, or cheerfully and intelligently recognised his immense force. And accordingly we cannot help perceiving that generations are arising who know not Byron. This is not to say that he goes unread; but there is a vast gulf fixed between the author whom we read with pleasure and even delight, and that other to whom we turn at all moments for inspiration and encouragement, and whose words and ideas spring up incessantly and animatingly within us, unbidden, whether we turn to him or no.

For no Englishman now does Byron hold this highest place; and this is not unnatural in any way, if we remember in what a different shape the Revolution has now by change of circumstance and occasion come to present itself to those who are most ardent in the search after new paths. An estimate of Byron would be in some sort a measure of the distance that we have travelled within the last half-century in our appreciation of the conditions of social change. The modern rebel is at least half-acquiescence. He has developed a historic sense. The most hearty aversion to the prolonged reign of some of the old gods does not hinder him from seeing that what are now frigid and unlovely blocks were full of vitality and light in days before the era of their petrifaction. There is much less eagerness of praise or blame, and much less faith in knife and cautery, less confidence that new and right growth will naturally and necessarily follow upon demolition.

The Revolution has never had that long hold on the national imagination in England, either as an idol or a bugbear, which is essential to keep the poet who sings it in effective harmony with new generations of readers. More than this, the Byronic conception was as transitional and inadequate as the methods and ideas of the practical movers, who were to a man left stranded in every country in Europe, during the period of his poetic activity. A transitional and unstable movement of society inevitably fails to supply a propulsion powerful enough to make its poetic expression eternal. There is no better proof of the enormous force of Byron's genius than that it was able to produce so fine an expression of elements so intrinsically unfavourable to high poetry as doubt, denial, antagonism, and weariness. But this force was no guarantee for perpetuity of influence. Bare rebellion cannot endure, and no succession of generations can continue nourishing themselves on the poetry of complaint, and the idealisation of revolt. If, however, it is impossible that Byron should be all to us that he was to a former generation, and if we find no direct guidance in his muse, this is no reason why criticism should pass him over, nor why there may not be something peculiarly valuable in the noble freedom and genuine modernism of his poetic spirit, to an age that is apparently only forsaking the clerical idyll of one school, for the reactionary mediaevalism or paganism, intrinsically meaningless and issueless, of another.

More attention is now paid to the mysteries of Byron's life than to the merits of his work, and criticism and morality are equally injured by the confusion between the worth of the verse he wrote, and the virtue or wickedness of the life he lived. The admirers of his poetry appear sensible of some obligation to be the champions of his conduct, while those who have diligently gathered together the details of an accurate knowledge of the unseemliness of his conduct, cannot bear to think that from this bramble men have been able to gather figs. The result of the confusion has been that grave men and women have applied themselves to investigate and judge Byron's private life, as if the exact manner of it, the more or less of his outrages upon decorum, the degree of the deadness of his sense of moral responsibility, were matter of minute and profound interest to all ages. As if all this had anything to do with criticism proper. It is right that we should know the life and manners of one whom we choose for a friend, or of one who asks us to entrust him with the control of public interests. In either of these two cases, we need a guarantee for present and future. Art knows nothing of guarantees. The work is before us, its own warranty. What is it to us whether Turner had coarse orgies with the trulls of Wapping? We can judge his art without knowing or thinking of the artist. And in the same way, what are the stories of Byron's libertinism to us? They may have biographical interest, but of critical interest hardly the least. If the name of the author of *Manfred*, *Cain*, *Childe Harold*, were already lost, as it may be in remote times, the work abides, and its mark on European opinion. '*Je ne considère les gens après leur mort,*' said Voltaire, '*que par leurs ouvrages; tout le reste est anéanti pour moi.*'

There is a sense in which biographical detail gives light to criticism, but not the sense in which the prurient moralist uses or seeks it. The life of the poet may help to explain the growth and prominence of a characteristic sentiment or peculiar idea. Knowledge of this or that fact in his life may uncover the roots of something that strikes, or unravel something that perplexes us. Considering the relations between a man's character and circumstance, and what he produces, we can from this point of view hardly know too much as to the personality of a great writer. Only let us recollect that this personality manifests itself outwardly in two separate forms, in conduct, and in literary production, and that each of these manifestations is to be judged independently of the other. If one of them is wholly censurable, the other may still be the outcome of the better mind; and even from the purely biographical aspect, it is a plain injustice to insist on identifying a character with its worse expression only.

Poetry, and not only poetry, but every other channel of emotional expression and aesthetic culture, confessedly moves with the general march of the human mind, and art is only the transformation into ideal and imaginative shapes of a predominant system and philosophy of life. Minor verse-writers may fairly be consigned, without disrespect, to the region of the literature of taste; and criticism of their work takes the shape of a discussion of stray graces, of new turns, of little variations of shade and colour, of their conformity to the accepted rules that constitute the technique of poetry. The loftier masters, though their technical power and originality, their beauty of form, strength of flight, music and variousness of rhythm, are all full of interest and instruction, yet, besides these precious gifts, come to us with the size and quality of great historic forces, for they represent the hope and energies, the dreams and the consummation, of the human intelligence in its most enormous movements. To appreciate one of these, we need to survey it on every side. For these we need synthetic criticism, which, after analysis has done its work, and disclosed to us the peculiar qualities of form, conception, and treatment, shall collect the products of this first process, construct for us the poet's mental figure in its integrity and just coherence, and then finally, as the sum of its work, shall trace the relations of the poet's ideas, either direct or indirect, through the central currents of thought, to the visible tendencies of an existing age.

The greatest poets reflect beside all else the broad-bosomed haven of a perfect and positive faith, in which mankind has for some space found shelter, unsuspicious of the new and distant wayfarings that are ever in store. To this band of sacred bards few are called, while perhaps not more than four high names would fill the list of the chosen: Dante, the poet of Catholicism; Shakespeare, of Feudalism; Milton, of Protestantism; Goethe, of that new faith which is as yet without any universally recognised label, but whose heaven is an ever closer harmony between the consciousness of man and all the natural forces of the universe; whose liturgy is culture, and whose deity is a certain high composure of the human heart.

The far-shining pre-eminence of Shakespeare, apart from the incomparable fertility and depth of his natural gifts, arises secondarily from the larger extent to which he transcended the special forming influences, and refreshed his fancy and widened his range of sympathy, by recourse to what was then the nearest possible approach to a historic or political method. To the poet, vision reveals a certain form of the truth, which the rest of men laboriously discover and prove by the tardier methods of meditation and science. Shakespeare did not walk in imagination with the great warriors, monarchs, churchmen, and rulers of history, nor conceive their conduct, ideas, schemes, and throw himself into their words and actions, without strengthening that original taste which must have first drawn him to historical subjects, and without deepening both his feeling for the great progression of human affairs, and his sympathy for those relative moods of surveying and dealing with them, which are not more positive, scientific, and political, than they may be made truly poetic.

Again, while in Dante the inspiring force was spiritual, and in Goethe it was intellectual, we may say that both in Shakespeare and Milton it was political and social. In other words, with these two, the drama of the one and the epic of the other were each of them connected with ideas of government and the other external movements of men in society, and with the play of the sentiments which spring from them. We assuredly do not mean that in either of them, least of all in Shakespeare, there is an absence of the spiritual element. This would be at once to thrust them down into a lower place; for the spiritual is of the very essence of poetry. But with the spiritual there mixes in our Englishmen a most abundant leaven of recognition of the impressions and impulses of the outer forms of life, as well as of active sympathy with the every-day debate of the world. They are neither of them inferior to the highest in sense of the wide and unutterable things of the spirit; yet with both of them, more than with other poets of the same rank, the man with whose soul and circumstance they have to deal is the *πολιτικὸν ζῷον*, no high abstraction of the race, but the creature with concrete relations and a full objective life. In Shakespeare the dramatic form helps partly to make this more prominent, though the poet's spirit shines forth thus, independently of the mould which it imposes on itself. Of Milton we may say, too, that, in spite of the supernatural machinery of his greatest poem, it bears strongly impressed on it the political mark, and that in those minor pieces, where he is avowedly in the political sphere, he still rises to the full height of his majestic harmony and noblest dignity.

Byron was touched by the same fire. The contemporary and friend of the most truly spiritual of all English poets, Shelley, he was himself among the most essentially political. Or perhaps one will be better understood, describing his quality as a quality of poetical *worldliness*, in its enlarged and generous sense of energetic interest in real transactions, and a capacity of being moved and raised by them into those lofty moods of emotion which in more spiritual natures are only kindled by contemplation of the vast infinitudes that compass the human soul round about. That Shelley was immeasurably superior to Byron in all the rarer qualities of the specially poetic mind appears to us so unmistakably assured a fact, that difference of opinion upon it can only spring from a more fundamental difference of opinion as to what it is that constitutes this specially poetic quality. If more than anything else it consists in the power of transfiguring action, character, and thought, in the serene radiance of the purest imaginative intelligence, and the gift of expressing these transformed products in the finest articulate vibrations of emotional speech, then must we not confess that Byron has composed no piece which from this point may compare with *Prometheus* or *The Cenci*, any more than Rubens may take his place with Raphael? We feel that Shelley transports the spirit to the highest bound and limit of the intelligible; and that with him thought passes through one superadded and more rarefying process than the other poet is master of. If it be true, as has been written, that 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge,' we may say that Shelley teaches us to apprehend that further something, the breath and finer spirit of poetry itself. Contrasting, for example, Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, with the famous and truly noble stanzas on the eternal sea which close the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, who does not feel that there is in the first a volatile and unseizable element that is quite distinct from the imagination and force and high impressiveness, or from any indefinable product of all of these united, which form the glory and power of the second? We may ask in the same way whether *Manfred*, where the spiritual element is as predominant as it ever is in Byron, is worth half a page of *Prometheus*.

To perceive and admit this is not to disparage Byron's achievements. To be most deeply penetrated with the differentiating quality of the poet is not, after all, to contain the whole of that admixture of varying and moderating elements which goes to the composition of the broadest and most effective work. Of these elements, Shelley, with all his rare gifts of spiritual imagination and winged melodiousness of verse, was markedly wanting in a keen and omnipresent feeling for the great course of human events. All nature stirred him, except the consummating crown of natural growth.

We do not mean anything so untrue as that Shelley was wanting either in deep humanity or in active benevolence, or that social injustice was a thing indifferent to him. We do not forget the energetic political propagandism of his youth in Ireland and elsewhere. Many a furious stanza remains to show how deeply and bitterly the spectacle of this injustice burnt into his soul. But these pieces are accidents. They do not belong to the immortal part of his work. An American original, unconsciously bringing the revolutionary mind to the climax of all utterances possible to it, has said that 'men are degraded when considered as the members of a political organisation.'[1] Shelley's position was on a yet more remote pinnacle than this. Of mankind he was barely conscious, in his loftiest and divinest flights. His muse seeks the vague translucent spaces where the care of man melts away in vision of the eternal forces, of which man may be but the fortuitous manifestation of an hour.

Byron, on the other hand, is never moved by the strength of his passion or the depth of his contemplation quite away from the round earth and the civil animal who dwells upon it. Even his misanthropy is only an inverted form of social solicitude. His practical zeal for good and noble causes might teach us this. He never grudged either money or time or personal peril for the cause of Italian freedom, and his life was the measure and the cost of his interest in the liberty of Greece. Then again he was full not merely of wit, which is sometimes only an affair of the tongue, but of humour also, which goes much deeper; and it is of the essence of the humoristic nature, that whether sunny or saturnine, it binds the thoughts of him who possesses it to the wide medley of expressly human things. Byron did not misknow himself, nor misapprehend the most marked turn of his own character when he wrote the lines—

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[1] Thoreau.

> I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
> From these our interviews, in which I steal
> From all I may be, or have been before,
> To mingle with the universe and feel
> What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

It was this which made Byron a social force, a far greater force than Shelley either has been or can be. Men read in each page that he was one of like passions with themselves; that he had their own feet of clay, if he had other members of brass and gold and fine silver which they had none of; and that vehement sensibility, tenacious energy of imagination, a bounding swell of poetic fancy, had not obliterated, but had rather quickened, the sense of the highest kind of man of the world, which did not decay but waxed stronger in him with years. His openness to beauty and care for it were always inferior in keenness and in hold upon him to his sense of human interest, and the superiority in certain respects of *Marino Faliero*, for example, where he handles a social theme in a worthy spirit, over *Manfred*, where he seeks a something tumultuously beautiful, is due to that subordination in his mind of aesthetic to social intention, which is one of the most strongly distinctive marks of the truly modern spirit. The admirable wit both of his letters, and of pieces like the *Vision of Judgment* and *Don Juan*, where wit reaches as high as any English writer has ever carried it, shows in another way the same vividness and reality of attraction which every side of human affairs possessed for this glowing and incessantly animated spirit.

In spite of a good many surface affectations, which may have cheated the lighter heads, but which may now be easily seen through, and counted off for as much as they are worth, Byron possessed a bottom of plain sincerity and rational sobriety which kept him substantially straight, real, and human, and made him the genuine exponent of that immense social movement which we sum up as the Revolution. If Keats's whole soul was absorbed by sensuous impressions of the outer world, and his art was the splendid and exquisite reproduction of these; if Shelley on the other hand distilled from the fine impressions of the senses by process of inmost meditation some thrice ethereal essence, 'the viewless spirit of a lovely sound;' we may say of Byron that, even in the moods when the mightiness and wonder of nature had most effectually possessed themselves of his imagination, his mind never moved for very long on these remote heights, apart from the busy world of men, but returned again like the fabled dove from the desolate void of waters to the ark of mortal stress and human passion. Nature, in her most dazzling aspects or stupendous parts, is but the background and theatre of the tragedy of man.

We may find a secondary proof of this in the fewness of those fine descriptive strokes and subtle indirect touches of colour or sound which arise with incessant spontaneity, where a mastering passion for nature steeps the mind in vigilant, accurate, yet half-unconscious, observation. It is amazing through how long a catalogue of natural objects Byron sometimes takes us, without affixing to one of them any but the most conventional term, or a single epithet which might show that in passing through his mind it had yielded to him a beauty or a savour that had been kept a secret from the common troop. Byron is certainly not wanting in commanding image, as when Manfred likens the lines of foaming light flung along from the Alpine cataract to 'the pale courser's tail, the giant steed, to be bestrode by Death.' But imaginative power of this kind is not the same thing as that susceptibility to the minutest properties and unseen qualities of natural objects which reveals itself in chance epithet of telling felicity, or phrase that opens to us hidden lights. Our generation is more likely to think too much than too little of this; for its favourite poet, however narrow in subject and feeble in moral treatment, is without any peer in the exquisitely original, varied, and imaginative art of his landscape touches.

This treatment of nature was in exact harmony with the method of revolutionary thought, which, from the time of Rousseau downwards, had appealed in its profound weariness of an existing social state to the solitude and seeming freedom of mountain and forest and ocean, as though the only cure for the woes of civilisation lay in annihilating it. This was an appeal less to nature than from man, just as we have said that Byron's was, and hence it was distinct from the single-eyed appreciation and love of Nature for her own sake, for her beauty and terror and unnumbered moods, which has made of her the mistress and the consoler of many men in these times. In the days of old faith while the catholic gods sat yet firm upon their thrones, the loveliness of the universe shone to blind eyes. Saint Bernard in the twelfth century could ride for a whole day along the shore of the Lake of Geneva, and yet when in the evening his comrades spoke some word about the lake, he inquired: 'What lake?'[1] It was not mere difference of temperament that made the preacher of one age pass by in this marvellous unconsciousness, and the singer of another burst forth into that tender invocation of 'clear placid Leman,' whose 'contrasted lake with the wild world he dwelt in' moved him to the very depths. To Saint Bernard the world was as wild and confused as it was to Byron; but then he had gods many and saints many, and a holy church in this world, and a kingdom of heaven awaiting resplendent in the world to come. All this filled his soul with a settled certitude, too absorbing to leave any space for other than religious emotion. The seven centuries that flowed between the spiritual mind of Europe when Saint Bernard was its spokesman, and the spiritual mind of which Byron was the interpreter, had gradually dissolved these certitudes, and the faint lines of new belief and a more durable order were still invisible. The assurance of science was not yet rooted, nor had men as yet learned to turn back to the history of their own kind, to the long chronicle of its manifold experiences, for an adequate system of life and an inspiring social faith. So they fled in spirit or in flesh into unfamiliar scenes, and vanished from society, because society was not sufficiently social.

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[1] Morison's *Life of St. Bernard*, p. 68 (2nd edit.).

The feeling was abnormal, and the method was fundamentally artificial. A sentimentalism arose, which is in art what the metaphysical method is in philosophy. Yet a literature was born of it, whose freshness, force, elevation, and, above all, a self-assertion and peculiar aspiring freedom that have never been surpassed, still exert an irresistible attraction, even over minds that are furthest removed from the moral storm and disorder, and the confused intellectual convictions, of that extraordinary group. Perhaps the fact that their active force is spent, and that men find in them now only a charm and no longer a gospel, explains the difference between the admiration which some of us permit ourselves to feel for them, and the impatient dislike which they stirred in our fathers. Then they were a danger, because they were a force, misleading amiable and high-minded people into blind paths. Now this is at an end, and, apart from their historic interest, the permanent elements of beauty draw us to them with a delight that does not diminish as we recede further and further from the impotence of the aspirations which thus married themselves to lofty and stirring words. To say nothing of Rousseau, the father and founder of the nature-worship, which is the nearest approach to a positive side that the Revolution has ever possessed, how much fine colour and freshness of feeling there is in *René*, what a sense of air and space in *Paul and Virginia*, and what must they have been to a generation that had just emerged from the close parlours of Richardson, the best of the sentimentalists of the pre-revolutionary type? May we not say, too, in parenthesis, that the man is the votary, not of wisdom, but of a bald and shapeless asceticism, who is so excessively penetrated with the reality, the duties, the claims, and the constant hazards of civilisation, as to find in himself no chord responsive to that sombre pensiveness into which Obermann's unfathomable melancholy and impotence of will deepened, as he meditated on the mean shadows which men are content to chase for happiness, and on all the pigmy progeny of giant effort? '*C'est peu de chose,*' says Obermann, '*de n'être point comme le vulgaire des hommes; mais c'est avoir fait un pas vers la sagesse, que de n'être plus comme le vulgaire des sages.*' This penetrating remark hits the difference between De Sénancour himself and most of the school. He is absolutely free from the vulgarity of wisdom, and breathes the air of higher peaks, taking us through mysterious and fragrant pine-woods, where more than he may find meditative repose amid the heat and stress of that practical day, of which he and his school can never bear the burden.

In that *vulgaire des sages*, of which De Sénancour had none, Byron abounded. His work is in much the glorification of revolutionary commonplace. Melodramatic individualism reaches its climax in that long series of Laras, Conrads, Manfreds, Harolds, who present the fatal trilogy, in which crime is middle term between debauch and satiety, that forms the natural development of an anti-social doctrine in a full-blooded temperament. It was this temperament which, blending with his gifts of intellect, gave Byron the amazing copiousness and force that makes him the dazzling master of revolutionary emotion, because it fills his work with such variety of figures, such free change of incident, such diversity of passion, such a constant movement and agitation. It was this never-ceasing stir, coupled with a striking concreteness and an unfailing directness, which rather than any markedly correct or wide intellectual apprehension of things, made him so much more than any one else an effective interpreter of the moral tumult of the epoch. If we look for psychological delicacy, for subtle moral traits, for opening glimpses into unobserved depths of character, behold, none of these things are there. These were no gifts of his, any more than the divine gift of music was his. There are some writers whose words but half express the indefinable thoughts that inspired them, and to whom we have to surrender our whole minds with a peculiar loyalty and fulness, independent of the letter and printed phrase, if we would liquefy the frozen speech and recover some portion of its imprisoned essence. This is seldom a necessity with Byron. His words tell us all that he means to say, and do not merely hint nor suggest. The matter with which he deals is gigantic, and he paints with violent colours and sweeping pencil.

Yet he is free from that declamation with which some of the French poets of the same age, and representing a portion of the same movement, blow out their cheeks. An angel of reasonableness seems to watch over him, even when he comes most dangerously near to an extravagance. He is equally free from a strained antithesis, which would have been inconsistent, not only with the breadth of effect required by Byron's art, but also with the peculiarly direct and forcible quality of his genius. In the preface to *Marino Faliero*, a composition that abounds in noble passages, and rests on a fine and original conception of character, he mentions his 'desire of preserving a nearer approach to unity, than the irregularity which is the reproach of the English theatre.' And this sound view of the importance of form, and of the barbarism to which our English genius is prone, from *Goody Blake and Harry Gill* up to the clownish savagery which occasionally defaces even plays attributed to Shakespeare, is collateral proof of the sanity and balance which marked the foundations of his character, and which at no point of his work ever entirely failed him. Byron's admiration for Pope was no mere eccentricity.

We may value this self-control the more, by remembering the nature of his subjects. We look out upon a wild revolutionary welter, of vehement activity without a purpose, boundless discontent without a hope, futile interrogation of nature in questions for which nature can have no answer, unbridled passion, despairing satiety, impotence. It is too easy, as the history of English opinion about Byron's poetic merit abundantly proves, to underrate the genius which mastered so tremendous a conflict, and rendered that amazing scene with the flow and energy and mingled tempest and forlorn calm which belonged to the original reality. The essential futility of the many moods which went to make up all this, ought not to blind us to the enormous power that was needed for the reproduction of a turbulent and not quite aimless chaos of the soul, in which man seemed to be divorced alike from his brother-men in the present, and from all the long succession and endeavour of men in the past. It was no small feat to rise to a height that should command so much, and to exhibit with all the force of life a world that had broken loose from its moorings.

It is idle to vituperate this anarchy, either from the point of view of a sour and precise Puritanism, or the more elevated point of a rational and large faith in progress. Wise men are like Burke, who did not know how to draw an indictment against a whole nation. They do not know how to think nothing but ill of a whole generation that lifted up its voice in heartfelt complaint and wailing against the conceptions, forms, and rulers, human and divine, of a society that the inward faith had abandoned, but which clung to every outward ordinance; which only remembered that man had property, and forgot that he had a spirit. This is the complaint that rings through Byron's verse. It was this complaint that lay deep at the bottom of the Revolution, and took form in every possible kind of protest, from a dishevelled neckcloth up to a profession of atheism. Byron elaborated the common emotion, as the earliest modern poets elaborated the common speech. He gave it inflections, and distinguished its moods, and threw over it an air of system and coherency, and a certain goodly and far-reaching sonorousness. This is the usual function of the spiritual leader, who leaves in bulk no more in the minds of those whom he attracts than he found, but he leaves it articulate with many sounds, and vivid with the consciousness of a multitude of defined impressions.

That the whole movement, in spite of its energy, was crude, unscientific, virtually abortive, is most true. That it was presided over by a false conception of nature as a benign and purifying power, while she is in truth a stern force to be tamed and mastered, if society is to hold together, cannot be denied of the revolutionary movement then, any more than it can be denied of its sequels now. Nor need we overlook its fundamental error of tracing half the misfortunes and woes of the race to that social union, to which we are really indebted for all the happiness we know, including even this dignifying sensibility of the woes of the race; and the other half to a fictitious entity styled destiny, placed among the nethermost gods, which would be more rightly regarded as the infinitely modifiable influence exercised by one generation of ourselves upon those that follow.

Every one of these faults of thought is justly chargeable to Byron. They were deeply inherent in the Revolution. They coloured thoughts about government, about laws, about morals. They effected a transformation of religion, but, resting on no basis of philosophical acceptance of history, the transformation was only temporary. They spread a fantastic passion of which Byron was himself an example and a victim, for extraordinary outbreaks of a peculiar kind of material activity, that met the exigences of an imperious will, while it had not the irksomeness of the self-control which would have exercised the will to more permanent profit. They destroyed faith in order, natural or social, actual or potential, and substituted for it an enthusiastic assertion of the claims of the individual to make his passions, aspirations, and convictions, a final and decisive law.

Such was the moral state which Byron had to render and interpret. His relation to it was a relation of exact sympathy. He felt the force of each of the many currents that united in one destructive stream, wildly overflowing the fixed banks, and then, when it had overflowed, often, it must be confessed, stagnating in lazy brackish pools, while new tributaries began to flow in together from far other quarters. The list of his poems is the catalogue of the elements of the revolutionary spirit. For of what manner is this spirit? Is it not a masterful and impatient yearning after many good things, unsubdued and uninformed either by a just knowledge of the time, and the means which are needed to bring to men the fruits of their hope, or by a fit appreciation of orderly and tranquil activity for the common service, as the normal type of the individual life? And this is precisely the temper and the spirit of Byron. Nowhere else do we see drawn in such traits that colossal figure, which has haunted Europe these fourscore years and more, with its new-born passion, its half-controlled will, its constant cry for a multitude of unknown blessings under the single name of Freedom, the one known and unadulterated word of blessing. If only Truth, which alone of words is essentially divine and sacrosanct, had been the chief talisman of the Revolution, the movement would have been very different from that which we know. But to claim this or that in the name of truth, would have been to borrow the language which priests and presbyters, Dominic and Calvin, had covered thick with hateful associations. Freedom, after all, was the next best thing, for it is an indispensable condition of the best of all; but it could not lead men until the spirit of truth, which means science in the intellectual order, and justice in the social order, had joined company with it.

So there was violent action in politics, and violent and excessive stimulation in literature, the positive effects of the force moved in each sphere being deplorably small in proportion to the intense moral energy which gave the impulse. In literature the straining for mental liberty was the more futile of the two, because it expressed the ardent and hopeless longing of the individual for a life which we may perhaps best call life unconditioned. And this unconditioned life, which the Byronic hero vainly seeks, and not finding, fills the world with stormy complaint, is least of all likely to offer itself in any approximate form to men penetrated with gross and egotistical passions to their inmost core. The Byronic hero went to clasp repose in a frenzy. All crimson and aflame with passion, he groaned for evening stillness. He insisted on being free, in the corroding fetters of resentment and scorn for men. Conrad sought balm for disappointment of spirit in vehement activity of body. Manfred represents the confusion common to the type, between thirst for the highest knowledge and proud violence of unbridled will.

Harold is held in a middle way of poetic melancholy, equally far from a speechless despair and from gay and reckless licence, by contemplation of the loveliness of external nature and the great exploits and perishing monuments of man in the past; but he, equally with the others, embodies the paradoxical hope that angry isolation and fretful estrangement from mankind are equivalent to emancipation from their pettiness, instead of being its very climax and demonstration. As if freedom of soul could exist without orderly relations of intelligence and partial acceptance between a man and the sum of surrounding circumstances. That universal protest which rings through Byron's work with a plangent resonance, very different from the whimperings of punier men, is a proof that so far from being free, one's whole being is invaded and laid waste. It is no ignoble mood, and it was a most inevitable product of the mental and social conditions of Western Europe at the close of the eighteenth century. Everlasting protest, impetuous energy of will, melancholy and despondent reaction;—this is the revolutionary course. Cain and Conrad; then Manfred and Lara and Harold.

In studying that portion of the European movement which burst forth into flame in France between the fall of the Bastille and those fatal days of Vendémiaire, Fructidor, Floréal, Brumaire, in which the explosion came convulsively to its end, we seem to see a microcosm of the Byronic epos. The succession of moods is identical. Overthrow, rage, intense material energy, crime, profound melancholy, half-cynical dejection. The Revolution was the battle of Will against the social forces of a dozen centuries. Men thought that they had only to will the freedom and happiness of a world, and all nature and society would be plastic before their daring, as clay in the hands of the potter. They could only conceive of failure as another expression for inadequate will. Is not this one of the notes of Byron's *Ode on the Fall of Bonaparte?* '*L'audace, l'audace, et toujours l'audace.*' If Danton could have read Byron, he would have felt as one in front of a magician's glass. Every passion and fit, from the bloody days of September down to the gloomy walks by the banks of the Aube, and the prison-cry that 'it were better to be a poor fisherman than to meddle with the governing of men,' would have found itself there. It is true that in Byron we miss the firmness of noble and generous hope. This makes him a more veritable embodiment of the Revolution than such a precursor as Rousseau, in whom were all the unclouded anticipations of a dawn that opened to an obscured noon and a tempestuous night. Yet one knows not, in truth, how much of that violence of will and restless activity and resolute force was due less to confidence, than to the urgent necessity which every one of us has felt, at some season and under some influence, of filling up spiritual vacuity by energetic material activity. Was this the secret of the mysterious charm that scenes of violent strife and bloodshed always had for Byron's imagination, as it was perhaps the secret of the black transformation of the social faith of '89 into the worship of the Conqueror of '99? Nowhere does Byron's genius show so much of its own incomparable fire and energy, nor move with such sympathetic firmness and amplitude of pinion, as in *Lara*, *The Corsair*, *Harold*, and other poems, where 'Red Battle stamps his foot,' and where

> The giant on the mountain stands,
> His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
> With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
> And eye that scorcheth all it glows upon.

Yet other and intrinsically nobler passages, where this splendid imaginative energy of the sensations is replaced by the calmer glow of social meditation, prove that Byron was penetrated with the distinctively modern scorn and aversion for the military spirit, and the distinctively modern conviction of its being the most deadly of anachronisms. Such indirect satisfaction to the physical energies was to him, as their direct satisfaction was to the disillusioned France of '99, the relief demanded by a powerful nature for the impotence of hope and vision.

However this may have been, it may be confessed that Byron presents less of the flame of his revolutionary prototypes, and too much of the ashes. He came at the end of the experiment. But it is only a question of proportion. The ashes belong as much and as necessarily to the methods of the Revolution in that phase, as do the blaze, that first told men of possible light and warmth, and the fire, which yet smoulders with abundant life underneath the grey cinders. And we have to remember that Byron came in the midst of a reaction; a reaction of triumph for the partisans of darkness and obstruction, who were assured that the exploded fragments of the old order would speedily grow together again, and a reaction of despondency for those who had filled themselves with illimitable and peremptory hopes. Silly Byronical votaries, who only half understood their idol, and loved him for a gloom that in their own case was nothing but a graceful veil for selfishness and mental indolence, saw and felt only the melancholy conclusion, and had not travelled a yard in the burning path that led to it. They hugged Conrad's haughty misery, but they would have trembled at the thought of Conrad's perilous expedition. They were proud despondent Laras after their manner, 'lords of themselves, that heritage of woe,' but the heritage would have been still more unbearable, if it had involved Lara's bodily danger.

This shallowness has no part in Byron himself. His weariness was a genuine outcome of the influence of the time upon a character consumed by passion. His lot was cast among spent forces, and, while it is no hyperbole to say that he was himself the most enormous force of his time, he was only half conscious of this, if indeed he did not always inwardly shrink from crediting his own power and strength, as so many strong men habitually do, in spite of noisy and perpetual self-assertion. Conceit and presumption have not been any more fatal to the world, than the waste which comes of great men failing in their hearts to recognise how great they are. Many a man whose affectations and assumptions are a proverb, has lost the magnificent virtue of simplicity for no other reason than that he needed courage to take his own measure, and so finally confirm to himself the reality of his pretensions. With Byron, as with some of his prototypes among the men of action in France and elsewhere, theatrical ostentation, excessive self-consciousness, extravagant claims, cannot hide from us that their power was secretly drained by an ever-present distrust of their own aims, their own methods, even of the very results that they seem to have achieved.

This diffidence was an inseparable consequence of the vast predominance of exalted passion over reflection, which is one of the revolutionary marks. Byron was fundamentally and substantially, as has been already said, one of the most rational of men. Hence when the passionate fit grew cold, as it always does in temperaments so mixed, he wanted for perfect strength a justification in thought. There are men whose being is so universally possessed by phantasies, that they never feel this necessity of reconciling the visions of excited emotion with the ideas of ordered reason. Byron was more vigorously constituted, and his susceptibility to the necessity of this reconciliation combined with his inability to achieve it to produce that cynicism which the simple charity of vulgar opinion attributes to the possession of him by unclean devils. It was his refuge, as it sometimes is with smaller men, from the disquieting confusion which was caused by the disproportion between his visions and aspirations, and his intellectual means for satisfying himself seriously as to their true relations and substantive value. Only the man arrives at practical strength who is convinced, whether rightly or wrongly, that he knows all about his own ideas that needs to be known. Byron never did thus know himself, either morally or intellectually. The higher part of him was consciously dragged down by the degrading reminiscence of the brutishness of his youth and its connections and associations; they hung like miasma over his spirit. He could not rise to that sublimest height of moral fervour, when a man intrepidly chases from his memory past evil done, suppresses the recollection of old corruptions, declares that he no longer belongs to them nor they to him, and is not frightened by the past from a firm and lofty respect for present dignity and worth. It is a good thing thus to overthrow the tyranny of the memory, and to cast out the body of our dead selves. That Byron never attained this good, though he was not unlikely to have done so if he had lived longer, does not prove that he was too gross to feel its need, but it explains a moral weakness which has left a strange and touching mark on some of his later works.

So in the intellectual order, he knew too much in one sense, and in another too little. The strong man is not conscious of gaps and cataclysms in the structure of his belief, or else he would in so far instantly cease to be strong. One living, as Byron emphatically did, in the truly modern atmosphere, was bound by all the conditions of the atmosphere to have mastered what we may call the natural history of his own ideas and convictions; to know something of their position towards fact and outer circumstance and possibility; above all to have some trusty standard for testing their value, and assuring himself that they do really cover the field which he takes them to cover. People with a faith and people living in frenzy are equally under this law; but they take the completeness and coherency of their doctrine for granted. Byron was not the prey of habitual frenzy, and he was without a faith. That is to say, he had no firm basis for his conceptions, and he was aware that he had none. The same unrest which drove men of that epoch to Nature, haunted them to the end, because they had no systematic conception of her working and of human relations with her. In a word, there was no science. Byron was a warm admirer of the genius and art of Goethe, yet he never found out the central secret of Goethe's greatness, his luminous and coherent positivity. This is the crowning glory of the modern spirit, and it was the lack of this which went so far to neutralise Byron's hold of the other chief characteristics of that spirit, its freedom and spaciousness, its humaneness and wide sociality, its versatility and many-sidedness and passionate feeling for the great natural forces.

This positivity is the cardinal condition of strength for times when theology lies in decay, and the abstractions which gradually replaced the older gods have in their turn ceased to satisfy the intelligence and mould the will. All competent persons agree that it is the first condition of the attainment of scientific truth. Nobody denies that men of action find in it the first law of successful achievement in the material order. Its varied but always superlative power in the region of aesthetics is only an object of recent recognition, though great work enough has been done in past ages by men whose recognition was informal and inexpress. It is plain that, in the different classes of aesthetic manifestation, there will be differences in objective shape and colour, corresponding to the varied limits and conditions of the matter with which the special art has to deal; but the critic may expect to find in all a profound unity of subjective impression, and that, the impression of a self-sustaining order and a self-sufficing harmony among all those faculties and parts and energies of universal life, which come within the idealising range of art. In other words, the characteristically modern inspiration is the inspiration of law. The regulated play of forces shows itself as fit to stir those profound emotional impulses which wake the artistic soul, as ever did the gracious or terrible gods of antique or middle times. There are glories in Turner's idealisation of the energies of matter, which are at least as nobly imaginative and elevated, in spite of the conspicuous absence of the human element in them, as the highest products of the artists who believed that their work was for the service and honour of a deity.

It is as mistaken to suppose that this conviction of the supremacy of a cold and self-sustained order in the universe is fatal to emotional expansion, as it would be to suppose it fatal to intellectual curiosity. Experience has shown in the scientific sphere, that the gradual withdrawal of natural operations from the grasp of the imaginary volitions of imaginary beings has not tamed, but greatly stimulated and fertilised scientific curiosity as to the conditions of these operations. Why should it be otherwise in the aesthetic sphere? Why should all that part of our mental composition which responds to the beautiful and imaginative expression of real truths, be at once inflamed and satisfied by the thought that our whole lives, and all the movements of the universe, are the objects of the inexplicable caprice of Makers who are also Destroyers, and yet grow cold, apathetic, and unproductive in the shadow of the belief that we can only know ourselves as part of the stupendous and inexorable succession of phenomenal conditions, moving according to laws that may be formulated positively, but not interpreted morally, to new destinies that are eternally unfathomable? Why should this conception of a coherent order, free from the arbitrary and presumptuous stamp of certain final causes, be less favourable, either to the ethical or the aesthetic side of human nature, than the older conception of the regulation of the course of the great series by a multitude of intrinsically meaningless and purposeless volitions? The alertness of our sensations for all sources of outer beauty remains unimpaired. The old and lovely attitude of devout service does not pass away to leave vacancy, but is transformed into a yet more devout obligation and service towards creatures that have only their own fellowship and mutual ministry to lean upon; and if we miss something of the ancient solace of special and personal protection, the loss is not unworthily made good by the growth of an imperial sense of participation in the common movement and equal destination of eternal forces.

To have a mind penetrated with this spiritual persuasion, is to be in full possession of the highest strength that man can attain. It springs from a scientific and rounded interpretation of the facts of life, and is in a harmony, which freshly found truths only make more ample and elaborate, with all the conclusions of the intellect in every order. The active energies are not paralysed by the possibilities of enfeebling doubt, nor the reason drawn down and stultified by apprehension lest its methods should discredit a document, or its inferences clash with a dogma, or its light flash unseasonably on a mystery. There is none of the baleful distortion of hate, because evil and wrong-doing and darkness are acknowledged to be effects of causes, sums of conditions, terms in a series; they are to be brought to their end, or weakened and narrowed, by right action and endeavour, and this endeavour does not stagnate in antipathy, but concentrates itself in transfixing a cause. In no other condition of the spirit than this, in which firm acquiescence mingles with valorous effort, can a man be so sure of raising a calm gaze and an enduring brow to the cruelty of circumstance. The last appalling stroke of annihilation itself is measured with purest fortitude by one whose religious contemplation dwells most habitually upon the sovereignty of obdurate laws in the vast revolving circle of physical forces, on the one hand, and, on the other, upon that moral order which the vision and pity of good men for their fellows, guiding the spontaneous energy of all men in strife with circumstance, have raised into a structure sublimer and more amazing than all the majesty of outer nature.

In Byron's time the pretensions of the two possible answers to the great and eternally open questions of God, Immortality, and the like, were independent of that powerful host of inferences and analogies which the advance of physical discovery, and the establishment of a historical order, have since then brought into men's minds. The direct aggressions of old are for the most part abandoned, because it is felt that no fiercest polemical cannonading can drive away the impalpable darkness of error, but only the slow and silent presence of the dawning truth. *Cain* remains, a stern and lofty statement of the case against that theological tradition which so outrages, where it has not already too deeply depraved, the conscience of civilised man. Yet every one who is competent to judge, must feel how infinitely more free the mind of the poet would have been, if besides this just and holy rage, most laudable in its kind, his intellectual equipment had been ample enough and precise enough to have taught him, that all the conceptions that races of men have ever held, either about themselves or their deities, have had a source in the permanently useful instincts of human nature, are capable of explanation, and of a historical justification; that is to say, of the kind of justification which is, in itself and of its own force, the most instant destruction to what has grown to be an anachronism.

Byron's curiously marked predilection for dramatic composition, not merely for dramatic poems, as *Manfred* or *Cain*, but for genuine plays, as *Marino Faliero*, *Werner*, *The Two Foscari*, was the only sign of his approach to the really positive spirit. Dramatic art, in its purest modern conception, is genuinely positive; that is, it is the presentation of action, character, and motive in a self-sufficing and self-evolving order. There are no final causes, and the first moving elements are taken for granted to begin with. The dramatist creates, but it is the climax of his work to appear to stand absolutely apart and unseen, while the play unfolds itself to the spectator, just as the greater drama of physical phenomena unfolds itself to the scientific observer, or as the order of recorded history extends in natural process under the eye of the political philosopher. Partly, no doubt, the attraction which dramatic form had for Byron is to be explained by that revolutionary thirst for action, of which we have already spoken; but partly also it may well have been due to Byron's rudimentary and unsuspected affinity with the more constructive and scientific side of the modern spirit.

His idea of Nature, of which something has been already said, pointed in the same direction; for, although he made an abstraction and a goddess of her, and was in so far out of the right modern way of thinking about these outer forces, it is to be remembered that, while this dominant conception of Nature as introduced by Rousseau and others into politics was most mischievous and destructive, its place and worth in poetry are very different; because here in the region of the imagination it had the effect, without any pernicious practical consequences, of giving shape and proportion to that great idea of *ensemble* throughout the visible universe, which may be called the beginning and fountain of right knowledge. The conception of the relationship of the different parts and members of the vast cosmos was not accessible to Byron, as it is to a later generation, but his constant appeal in season and out of season to all the life and movement that surrounds man, implied and promoted the widest extension of consciousness of the wholeness and community of natural processes.

There was one very manifest evil consequence of the hold which this idea in its cruder shape gained over Byron and his admirers. The vastness of the material universe, as they conceived and half adored it, entirely overshadowed the principle of moral duty and social obligation. The domestic sentiment, for example, almost disappears in those works which made Byron most popular, or else it only appears, to be banished with reproach. This is quite in accordance with the revolutionary spirit, which was in one of its most fundamental aspects a revolt on behalf of unconditioned individual rights, and against the family. If we accept what seems to be the fatal law of progress, that excess on one side is only moderated by a nearly corresponding excess of an opposite kind, the Byronic dissolution of domestic feeling was not entirely without justification. There is probably no uglier growth of time than that mean and poor form of domesticity, which has always been too apt to fascinate the English imagination, ever since the last great effort of the Rebellion, and which rose to the climax of its popularity when George III. won all hearts by living like a farmer. Instead of the fierce light beating about a throne, it played lambently upon a sty. And the nation who admired, imitated. When the Regent came, and with him that coarse profligacy which has alternated with cloudy insipidity in the annals of the line, the honest part of the world, out of antipathy to the son, was driven even further into domestic sentimentality of a greasy kind, than it had gone from affection for the sire.

Byron helped to clear the air of this. His fire, his lofty spaciousness of outlook, his spirited interest in great national causes, his romance, and the passion both of his animosity and his sympathy, acted for a while like an electric current, and every one within his influence became ashamed to barter the large heritage of manhood, with its many realms and illimitable interests, for the sordid ease of the hearth and the good word of the unworthy. He fills men with thoughts that shake down the unlovely temple of comfort. This was good, to force whoever was not already too far sunk into the mire, high up to the larger atmosphere, whence they could see how minute an atom is man, how infinite and blind and pitiless the might that encompasses his little life. Many feeble spirits ran back homewards from the horrid solitudes and abysses of *Manfred*, and the moral terrors of *Cain*, and even the despair of *Harold*, and, burying themselves in warm domestic places, were comforted by the familiar restoratives and appliances. Firmer souls were not only exhilarated, but intoxicated by the potent and unaccustomed air. They went too far. They made war on the family, and the idea of it. Everything human was mischievously dwarfed, and the difference between right and wrong, between gratification of appetite and its control for virtue's sake, between the acceptance and the evasion of clear obligation, all became invisible or of no account in the new light. That constancy and permanence, of which the family is the type, and which is the first condition alike of the stability and progress of society, was obliterated from thought. As if the wonders that have been wrought by this regulated constancy of the feeling of man for man in transforming human life were not far more transcendently exalting than the contemplation of those glories of brute nature, which are barbaric in comparison.

It would be unjust not to admit that there are abundant passages in his poems of too manifest depth and sincerity of feeling, for us to suppose that Byron himself was dead to the beauty of domestic sentiment. The united tenderness and dignity of Faliero's words to Angiolina, before he goes to the meeting of the conspirators, would, if there were nothing else, be enough to show how rightly in his better moods the poet appreciated the conditions of the family. Unfortunately the better moods were not fixed, and we had *Don Juan*, where the wit and colour and power served to make an anti-social and licentious sentiment attractive to puny creatures, who were thankful to have their lasciviousness so gaily adorned. As for Great Britain, she deserved *Don Juan*. A nation, whose disrespect for all ideas and aspirations that cannot be supported by a text, nor circulated by a religious tract society, was systematic, and where consequently the understanding was least protected against sensual sophisms, received no more than a just chastisement in 'the literature of Satan.' Here again, in the licence of this literature, we see the finger of the Revolution, and of that egoism which makes the passions of the individual his own law. Let us condemn and pass on, homily undelivered. If Byron injured the domestic idea on this side, let us not fail to observe how vastly he elevated it on others. and how, above all, he pointed to the idea above and beyond it, in whose light only can that be worthy, the idea of a country and a public cause. A man may be sure that the comfort of the hearth has usurped too high a place, when he can read without response the lines declaring that domestic ties must yield in 'those who are called to the highest destinies, which purify corrupted commonwealths.'

We must forget all feelings save the one—
We must resign all passions save our purpose—
We must behold no object save our country—
And only look on death as beautiful,
So that the sacrifice ascend to heaven
And draw down freedom on her evermore.
Calendaro. But if we fail——
I. Bertuccio. They never fail who die
In a great cause: the block may soak their gore;
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom. What were we
If Brutus had not lived? He died in giving

Rome liberty, but left a deathless lesson—
A name which is a virtue, and a soul
Which multiplies itself throughout all time,
When wicked men wax mighty, and a state
Turns servile.

And the man who wrote this was worthy to play an even nobler part than the one he had thus nobly described; for it was not many years after, that Byron left all and laid down his life for the emancipation of a strange land, and 'Greece and Italy wept for his death, as it had been that of the noblest of their own sons.' Detractors have done their best to pare away the merit of this act of self-renunciation by attributing it to despair. That contemporaries of their own humour had done their best to make his life a load to him is true, yet to this talk of despair we may reply in the poet's own words:

When we know
All that can come, and how to meet it, our
Resolves, if firm, may merit a more noble
Word than this, to give it utterance.

There was an estimate of the value and purpose of a human life, which our Age of Comfort may fruitfully ponder.

To fix upon violent will and incessant craving for movement as the mark of a poet, whose contemporaries adored him for what they took to be the musing sweetness of his melancholy, may seem a critical perversity. There is, however, a momentous difference between that melancholy which is as the mere shadow projected by a man's spiritual form, and that other melancholy, which itself is the reality and substance of a character; between the soul to whom dejection brings graceful relief after labour and effort, and the soul which by irresistible habit and constitution dwells ever in Golgotha. This deep and penetrating subjective melancholy had no possession of Byron. His character was essentially objective, stimulated by outward circumstance, moving to outward harmonies, seeking colour and image and purpose from without. Hence there is inevitably a certain liveliness and animation, even when he is in the depths. We feel that we are watching clouds sweep majestically across the sky, and, even when they are darkest, blue interspaces are not far off. Contrast the moodiest parts of *Childe Harold* or of *Cain* with Novalis's *Night Hymns.* Byron's gloom is a mere elegance in comparison. The one pipes to us with a graceful despondency on the edge of the gulf, while the other carries us actually down into the black profound, with no rebellious cry, nor shriek of woe, but sombrely awaiting the deliverance of death, with soul absorbed and consumed by weariness. Let the reader mark the note of mourning struck in the opening stanzas, for instance, of Novalis's *Longing after Death*, their simplicity, homeliness, transparent sincerity, and then turn to any of the familiar passages where Byron meditates on the good things which the end brings to men. How artificial he seems, and unseasonably ornate, and how conscious of his public. In the first, we sit sadly on the ground in some veritable Place of a Skull; in the second, we assist at tragical distress after the manner of the Italian opera. We should be disposed to call the first a peculiarly German quality, until we remember Pascal. With Novalis, or with Pascal, as with all those whom character, or the outer fates, or the two together, have drawn to dwell in the valley of the shadow, gloom and despondency are the very stuff of their thoughts. Material energy could have done nothing for them. Their nerves and sinews were too nearly cut asunder. To know the quality of Byron's melancholy, and to recognise how little it was of the essence of his character, we have only to consider how far removed he was from this condition. In other words, in spite of morbid manifestations of one sort and another, he always preserved a salutary and vivid sympathy for action, and a marked capacity for it.

It was the same impetuous and indomitable spirit of effort which moved Byron to his last heroic exploit, that made the poetry inspired by it so powerful in Europe, from the deadly days of the Holy Alliance onwards. Cynical and misanthropical as he has been called, as though that were his sum and substance, he yet never ceased to glorify human freedom, in tones that stirred the hearts of men and quickened their hope and upheld their daring, as with the voice of some heavenly trumpet. You may, if you choose, find the splendour of the stanzas in the Fourth Canto on the Bourbon restoration, on Cromwell, and Washington, a theatrical splendour. But for all that, they touched the noblest parts of men. They are alive with an exalted and magnanimous generosity, the one high virtue which can never fail to touch a multitude. Subtlety may miss them, graces may miss them, and reason may fly over their heads, but the words of a generous humanity on the lips of poet or chief have never failed to kindle divine music in their breasts. The critic may censure, and culture may wave a disdainful hand. As has been said, all such words 'are open to criticism, and they are all above it.' The magic still works. A mysterious and potent word from the gods has gone abroad over the face of the earth.

This larger influence was not impaired by Byron's ethical poverty. The latter was an inevitable consequence of his defective discipline. The triteness of his moral climax is occasionally startling. When Sardanapalus, for instance, sees Zarina torn from him, and is stricken with profound anguish at the pain with which he has filled her life, he winds up with such a platitude as this:

> To what gulfs
> A single deviation from the track
> Of human duties leaves even those who claim
> The homage of mankind as their born due!

The baldest writer of hymns might work up passion enough for a consummation like this. Once more, Byron was insufficiently furnished with positive intellectual ideas, and for want of these his most exalted words were constantly left sterile of definite and pointed outcome.

Byron's passionate feeling for mankind included the long succession of generations, that stretch back into the past and lie far on in the misty distances of the future. No poet has had a more sublime sense of the infinite melancholy of history; indeed, we hardly feel how great a poet Byron was, until we have read him at Venice, at Florence, and above all in that overpowering scene where the 'lone mother of dead empires' broods like a mysterious haunting spirit among the columns and arches and wrecked fabrics of Rome. No one has expressed with such amplitude the sentiment that in a hundred sacred spots of the earth has

> Fill'd up
> As 'twere, anew, the gaps of centuries;
> Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
> And making that which was not; till the place
> Became religious, and the heart ran o'er
> With silent worship of the great of old—
> The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns.

Only he stands aright, who from his little point of present possession ever meditates on the far-reaching lines, which pass through his point from one interminable star-light distance to another. Neither the stoic pagan, nor the disciple of the creed which has some of the peculiar weakness of stoicism and not all its peculiar strength, could find Manfred's latest word untrue to himself:

> The mind, which is immortal, makes itself
> Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
> Is its own origin of ill and end,
> And its own place and time: its innate sense,
> When stripped of this mortality, derives
> No colour from the fleeting things without:
> But is absorbed in sufferance or joy,
> Born from the knowledge of its own desert.

It is only when a man subordinates this absorption in individual sufferance and joy to the thought that his life is a trust for humanity, that he is sure of making it anything other than 'rain fallen on the sand.' In the last great episode of his own career Byron was as lofty as the noblest side of his creed. The historic feeling for the unseen benefactors of old time was matched by vehemence of sympathy with the struggles for liberation of his own day. And for this, history will not forget him. Though he may have no place in our own Minster, he assuredly belongs to the band of far-shining men, of whom Pericles declared the whole world to be the tomb.

WORDSWORTH.[1]

THE poet whose works are contained in the present volume was born in the little town of Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7, 1770. He died at Rydal Mount, in the neighbouring county of Westmoreland, on April 23, 1850. In this long span of mortal years, events of vast and enduring moment shook the world. A handful of scattered and dependent colonies in the northern continent of America made themselves into one of the most powerful and beneficent of states. The ancient monarchy of France, and all the old ordering of which the monarchy had been the keystone, was overthrown, and it was not until after many a violent shock of arms, after terrible slaughter of men, after strange diplomatic combinations, after many social convulsions, after many portentous mutations of empire, that Europe once more settled down for a season into established order and system. In England almost alone, after the loss of her great possessions across the Atlantic Ocean, the fabric of the State stood fast and firm. Yet here, too, in these eighty years, an old order slowly gave place to new. The restoration of peace, after a war conducted with extraordinary tenacity and fortitude, led to a still more wonderful display of ingenuity, industry, and enterprise, in the more fruitful field of commerce and of manufactures. Wealth, in spite of occasional vicissitudes, increased with amazing rapidity. The population of England and Wales grew from being seven and a half millions in 1770, to nearly eighteen millions in 1850. Political power was partially transferred from a territorial aristocracy to the middle and trading classes. Laws were made at once more equal and more humane. During all the tumult of the great war which for so many years bathed Europe in fire, through all the throes and agitations in which peace brought forth the new time, Wordsworth for half a century (1799–1850) dwelt sequestered in unbroken composure and steadfastness in his chosen home amid the mountains and lakes of his native region, working out his own ideal of the high office of the Poet.

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[1] Originally published as an Introduction to the new edition of Wordsworth's *Complete Poetical Works* (1888).

The interpretation of life in books and the development of imagination underwent changes of its own. Most of the great lights of the eighteenth century were still burning, though burning low, when Wordsworth came into the world. Pope, indeed, had been dead for six-and-twenty years, and all the rest of the Queen Anne men had gone. But Gray only died in 1771, and Goldsmith in 1774. Ten years later Johnson's pious and manly heart ceased to beat. Voltaire and

Rousseau, those two diverse oracles of their age, both died in 1778. Hume had passed away two years before. Cowper was forty years older than Wordsworth, but Cowper's most delightful work was not produced until 1783. Crabbe, who anticipated Wordsworth's choice of themes from rural life, while treating them with a sterner realism, was virtually his contemporary, having been born in 1754, and dying in 1832. The two great names of his own date were Scott and Coleridge, the first born in 1771, and the second a year afterwards. Then a generation later came another new and illustrious group. Byron was born in 1788, Shelley in 1792, and Keats in 1795. Wordsworth was destined to see one more orb of the first purity and brilliance rise to its place in the poetic firmament. Tennyson's earliest volume of poems was published in 1830, and *In Memoriam*, one of his two masterpieces, in 1850. Any one who realises for how much these famous names will always stand in the history of human genius, may measure the great transition that Wordsworth's eighty years witnessed in some of men's deepest feelings about art and life and 'the speaking face of earth and heaven.'

Here, too, Wordsworth stood isolated and apart. Scott and Southey were valued friends, but, as has been truly said, he thought little of Scott's poetry, and less of Southey's. Of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* he said, 'There is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott.' Coleridge was the only member of the shining company with whom he ever had any real intimacy of mind, for whom he ever nourished real deference and admiration as one 'unrelentingly possessed by thirst of greatness, love, and beauty,' and in whose intellectual power, as the noble lines in the Sixth Book of the *Prelude* so gorgeously attest, he took the passionate interest of a man at once master, disciple, and friend. It is true to say, as Emerson says, that Wordsworth's genius was the great exceptional fact of the literature of his period. But he had no teachers nor inspirers save nature and solitude.

Wordsworth was the son of a solicitor, and all his early circumstances were homely, unpretentious, and rather straitened. His mother died when he was eight years old, and when his father followed her five years later, two of his uncles provided means for continuing at Cambridge the education which had been begun in the rural grammar-school of Hawkshead. It was in 1787 that he went up to St. John's College. He took his Bachelor's degree at the beginning of 1791, and there his connection with the university ended.

For some years after leaving Cambridge, Wordsworth let himself drift. He did not feel good enough for the Church; he shrank from the law; fancying that he had talents for command, he thought of being a soldier. Meanwhile, he passed a short time desultorily in London. Towards the end of 1791, through Paris, he passed on to Orleans and Blois, where he made some friends and spent most of a year. He returned to Paris in October 1792. France was no longer standing on the top of golden hours. The September massacres filled the sky with a lurid flame. Wordsworth still retained his ardent faith in the Revolution, and was even ready, though no better than ‘a landsman on the deck of a ship struggling with a hideous storm,’ to make common cause with the Girondists. But the prudence of friends at home forced him back to England before the beginning of the terrible year of ’93. With his return closed that first survey of its inheritance, which most serious souls are wont to make in the fervid prime of early manhood.

It would be idle to attempt any commentary on the bare facts that we have just recapitulated; for Wordsworth himself has clothed them with their full force and meaning in the *Prelude*. This record of the growth of a poet’s mind, told by the poet himself with all the sincerity of which he was capable, is never likely to be popular. Of that, as of so much more of his poetry, we must say that, as a whole, it has not the musical, harmonious, sympathetic quality which seizes us in even the prose of such a book as Rousseau’s *Confessions*. Macaulay thought the *Prelude* a poorer and more tiresome *Excursion*, with the old flimsy philosophy about the effect of scenery on the mind, the old crazy mystical metaphysics, and the endless wilderness of twaddle; still he admits that there are some fine descriptions and energetic declamations.

All Macaulay's tastes and habits of mind made him a poor judge of such a poet as Wordsworth. He valued spirit, energy, pomp, stateliness of form and diction, and actually thought Dryden's fine lines about to-morrow being falser than the former day equal to any eight lines in Lucretius. But his words truly express the effect of the *Prelude* on more vulgar minds than his own. George Eliot, on the other hand, who had the inward eye that was not among Macaulay's gifts, found the *Prelude* full of material for a daily liturgy, and it is easy to imagine how she fondly lingered, as she did, over such a thought as this—

> There is
> One great society alone on earth:
> The noble Living and the noble Dead.

There is, too, as may be found embedded even in Wordsworth's dullest work, many a line of the truest poetical quality, such as that on Newton's statue in the silent Chapel of Trinity College—

> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought alone.

Apart, however, from beautiful lines like this, and from many noble passages of high reflection set to sonorous verse, this remarkable poem is in its whole effect unique in impressive power, as a picture of the advance of an elect and serious spirit from childhood and school-time, through the ordeal of adolescence, through close contact with stirring and enormous events, to that decisive stage when it has found the sources of its strength, and is fully and finally prepared to put its temper to the proof.

The three Books that describe the poet's residence in France have a special and a striking value of their own. Their presentation of the phases of good men's minds as the successive scenes of the Revolution unfolded themselves has real historic interest. More than this, it is an abiding lesson to brave men how to bear themselves in hours of public stress. It portrays exactly that mixture of persevering faith and hope with firm and reasoned judgment, with which I like to think that Turgot, if he had lived, would have confronted the workings of the Revolutionary power. Great masters in many kinds have been inspired by the French Revolution. Human genius might seem to have exhausted itself in the burning political passion of Burke, in the glowing melodrama of fire and tears of Carlyle, Michelet, Hugo; but the ninth, tenth, and eleventh Books of the *Prelude*, by their strenuous simplicity, their deep truthfulness, their slow-footed and inexorable transition from ardent hope to dark imaginations, sense of woes to come, sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart, breathe the very spirit of the great catastrophe. There is none of the ephemeral glow of the political exhortation, none of the tiresome falsity of the dithyramb in history. Wordsworth might well wish that some dramatic tale, endued with livelier shapes and flinging out less guarded words, might set forth the lessons of his experience. The material was fitting. The story of these three Books has something of the severity, the self-control, the inexorable necessity of classic tragedy, and like classic tragedy it has a noble end. The dregs and sour sediment that reaction from exaggerated hope is so apt to stir in poor natures had no place here. The French Revolution made the one crisis in Wordsworth's mental history, the one heavy assault on his continence of soul, and when he emerged from it all his greatness remained to him. After a long spell of depression, bewilderment, mortification, and sore disappointment, the old faith in new shapes was given back.

> Nature's self,
> By all varieties of human love
> Assisted, led me back through opening day
> To those sweet counsels between head and heart
> Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
> Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
> Hath still upheld me and upholds me now.

It was six years after his return from France before Wordsworth finally settled down in the scenes with which his name and the power of his genius were to be for ever associated. During this interval it was that two great sources of personal influence were opened to him. He entered upon that close and beloved companionship with his sister which remained unbroken to the end of their days ; and he first made the acquaintance of Coleridge. The character of Dorothy Wordsworth has long taken its place in the gallery of admirable and devoted women who have inspired the work and the thoughts of great men. 'She is a woman, indeed,' said Coleridge, 'in mind I mean, and heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty.' To the solidity, sense, and strong intelligence of the Wordsworth stock she added a grace, a warmth, a liveliness peculiarly her own. Her nature shines transparent in her letters, in her truly admirable journal, and in every report that we have of her. Wordsworth's own feelings for her, and his sense of the debt that he owed to her faithful affection and eager mind, he has placed on lasting record.

The intimacy with Coleridge was, as has been said, Wordsworth's one strong friendship, and must be counted among the highest examples of that generous relation between great writers. Unlike in the quality of their genius, and unlike in force of character and the fortunes of life, they remained bound to one another by sympathies that neither time nor harsh trial ever extinguished. Coleridge had left Cambridge in 1794, had married, had started various unsuccessful projects for combining the improvement of mankind with the earning of an income, and was now settled in a small cottage at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, with an acre and a half of land, from which he hoped to raise corn and vegetables enough to support himself and his wife, as well as to feed a couple of pigs on the refuse. Wordsworth and his sister were settled at

Racedown, near Crewkerne, in Dorsetshire. In 1797 they moved to Alfoxden, in Somersetshire, their principal inducement to the change being Coleridge's society. The friendship bore fruit in the production of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, mainly the work of Wordsworth, but containing no less notable a contribution from Coleridge than the *Ancient Mariner.* The two poets only received thirty guineas for their work, and the publisher lost his money. The taste of the country was not yet ripe for Wordsworth's poetic experiment.

Immediately after the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the two Wordsworths and Coleridge started from Yarmouth for Hamburg. Coleridge's account in Satyrane's Letters, published in the *Biographia Literaria*, of the voyage and of the conversation between the two English poets and Klopstock, is worth turning to. The pastor told them that Klopstock was the German Milton. 'A very German Milton indeed,' they thought. The Wordsworths remained for four wintry months at Goslar, in Saxony, while Coleridge went on to Ratzeburg, Göttingen, and other places, mastering German, and 'delving in the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic depths.' Wordsworth made little way with the language, but worked diligently at his own verse.

When they came back to England, Wordsworth and his sister found their hearts turning with irresistible attraction to their own familiar countryside. They at last made their way to Grasmere. The opening book of the *Recluse* describes in fine verse the emotions and the scene. The face of this delicious vale is not quite what it was when

> Cottages of mountain stone
> Clustered like stars some few, but single most,
> And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
> Or glancing at each other cheerful looks
> Like separated stars with clouds between.

But it is foolish to let ourselves be fretted by the villa, the hotel, and the tourist. We may well be above all this in a scene that is haunted by a great poetic shade. The substantial features and elements of beauty still remain, the crags and woody steeps, the lake, 'its one green island and its winding shores ; the multitude of little rocky hills.' Wordsworth was not the first poet to feel its fascination. Gray visited the Lakes in the autumn of 1769, and coming into the vale of Grasmere from the north-west, declared it to be one of the sweetest landscapes that art ever attempted to imitate, an unsuspected paradise of peace and rusticity. We cannot indeed compare the little crystal mere, set like a gem in the verdant circle of the hills, with the grandeur and glory of Lucerne, or the radiant gladness and expanse of Como : yet it has an inspiration of its own, to delight, to soothe, to fortify, and to refresh.

> What want we ? have we not perpetual streams,
> Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh green fields,
> And mountains not less green, and flocks and herds,

> And thickets full of songsters, and the voice
> Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound
> Heard now and then from morn to latest eve,
> Admonishing the man who walks below
> Of solitude and silence in the sky?
> These have we, and a thousand nooks of earth
> Have also these, but nowhere else is found,
> Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found
> The one sensation that is here; . . . 'tis the sense
> Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
> A blended holiness of earth and sky,
> Something that makes this individual spot,
> This small abiding-place of many men,
> A termination, and a last retreat,
> A centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
> A whole without dependence or defect,
> Made for itself, and happy in itself,
> Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

In the Grasmere vale Wordsworth lived for half a century, first in a little cottage at the northern corner of the lake, and then (1813) in a more commodious house at Rydal Mount at the southern end, on the road to Ambleside. In 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson, of Penrith, and this completed the circle of his felicity. Mary, he once said, was to his ear the most musical and most truly English in sound of all the names we have. The name was of harmonious omen. The two beautiful sonnets that he wrote on his wife's portrait long years after, when 'morning into noon had passed, noon into eve,' show how much her large heart and humble mind had done for the blessedness of his home.

Their life was almost more simple than that of the dalesmen their neighbours. 'It is my opinion,' ran one of his oracular sayings to Sir George Beaumont, 'that a man of letters, and indeed all public men of every pursuit, should be severely frugal.' Means were found for supporting the modest home out of two or three small windfalls bequeathed by friends or relatives, and by the time that children had begun to come Wordsworth was raised to affluence by obtaining the post of distributor of stamps for Westmoreland and part of Cumberland. His life was happily devoid of striking external incident. Its essential part lay in meditation and composition.

He was surrounded by friends. Southey had made a home for himself and his beloved library a few miles over the hills, at Keswick. De Quincey, with his clever brains and shallow character, took up his abode in the cottage in which Wordsworth had first lived at Grasmere. Coleridge, born the most golden genius of them all, came to and fro in those fruitless unhappy wanderings which consumed a life that once promised to be so rich in blessing and in glory. In later years Dr. Arnold built a house at Fox How, attracted by the Wordsworths and the scenery; and other lesser lights came into the neighbourhood. 'Our intercourse with the Wordsworths,' Arnold wrote on the occasion of his first visit in 1832, 'was one of the brightest spots of all; nothing could exceed their friendliness, and my almost daily walks with him were things not to be forgotten. Once and once only we had a good fight about the Reform

Bill during a walk up Greenhead Ghyll to see the unfinished sheepfold, recorded in *Michael.* But I am sure that our political disagreement did not at all interfere with our enjoyment of each other's society; for I think that in the great principles of things we agreed very entirely.' It ought to be possible, for that matter, for magnanimous men, even if they do not agree in the great principles of things, to keep pleasant terms with one another for more than one afternoon's walk. Many pilgrims came, and the poet seems to have received them with cheerful equanimity. Emerson called upon him in 1833, and found him plain, elderly, white-haired, not prepossessing. 'He led me out into his garden, and showed me the gravel walk in which thousands of his lines were composed. He had just returned from Staffa, and within three days had made three sonnets on Fingal's Cave, and was composing a fourth when he was called in to see me. He said, "If you are interested in my verses, perhaps you will like to hear these lines." I gladly assented, and he recollected himself for a few moments, and then stood forth and repeated, one after the other, the three entire sonnets with great animation. This recitation was so unlooked-for and surprising—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart, and reciting to me in a garden-walk, like a schoolboy declaiming—that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet, and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear. He never was in haste to publish; partly because he corrected a good deal. . . . He preferred such of his poems as touched the affections to any others; for whatever is didactic—what theories of society, and so on—might perish quickly, but whatever combined a truth with an affection was good to-day and good for ever' (*English Traits*, ch. i.).

Wordsworth was far too wise to encourage the pilgrims to turn into abiding sojourners in his chosen land. Clough has described how, when he was a lad of eighteen (1837), with a mild surprise he heard the venerable poet correct the tendency to exaggerate the importance of flowers and fields, lakes, waterfalls, and scenery. 'People come to the Lakes,' said Wordsworth, 'and are charmed with a particular spot, and build a house, and find themselves discontented, forgetting that these things are only the sauce and garnish of life.'

In spite of a certain hardness and stiffness, Wordsworth must have been an admirable companion for anybody capable of true elevation of mind. The unfortunate Haydon says, with his usual accent of enthusiasm, after a saunter at Hampstead, 'Never did any man so beguile the time as Wordsworth. His purity of heart, his kindness, his soundness of principle, his information, his knowledge, and the intense and eager feelings with which he pours forth all he knows, affect, interest, and enchant one' (*Autobiog.* i. 298, 384). The diary of Crabb Robinson, the correspondence of Charles Lamb, the delightful autobiography of

Mrs. Fletcher, and much less delightfully the autobiography of Harriet Martineau, all help us to realise by many a trait Wordsworth's daily walk and conversation. Of all the glimpses that we get, from these and many other sources, none are more pleasing than those of the intercourse between Wordsworth and Scott. They were the two manliest and most wholesome men of genius of their time. They held different theories of poetic art, but their affection and esteem for one another never varied, from the early days when Scott and his young wife visited Wordsworth in his cottage at Grasmere, down to that sorrowful autumn evening (1831) when Wordsworth and his daughter went to Abbotsford to bid farewell to the wondrous potentate, then just about to start on his vain search for new life, followed by 'the might of the whole earth's good wishes.'

Of Wordsworth's demeanour and physical presence, De Quincey's account, silly, coxcombical, and vulgar, is the worst; Carlyle's, as might be expected from his magical gift of portraiture, is the best. Carlyle cared little for Wordsworth's poetry, had a real respect for the antique greatness of his devotion to Poverty and Peasanthood, recognised his strong intellectual powers and strong character, but thought him rather dull, bad-tempered, unproductive, and almost wearisome, and found his divine reflections and unfathomabilities stinted, scanty, uncertain, palish. From these and many other disparagements, one gladly passes to the picture of the poet as he was in the flesh at a breakfast-party given by Henry Taylor, at a tavern in St. James's Street, in 1840. The subject of the talk was Literature, its laws, practices, and observances :—' He talked well in his way ; with veracity, easy brevity and force ; as a wise tradesman would of his tools and workshop, and as no unwise one could. His voice was good, frank, and sonorous, though practically clear, distinct, and forcible, rather than melodious ; the tone of him business-like, sedately confident ; no discourtesy, yet no anxiety about being courteous : a fine wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes, sat well on the stalwart veteran, and on all he said and did. You would have said he was a usually taciturn man, glad to unlock himself to audience sympathetic and intelligent, when such offered itself. His face bore marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation ; the look of it not bland or benevolent, so much as close, impregnable, and hard ; a man *multa tacere loquive paratus*, in a world where he had experienced no lack of contradictions as he strode along ! The eyes were not very brilliant, but they had a quiet clearness ; there was enough of brow, and well shaped ; rather too much of cheek (" horse-face," I have heard satirists say), face of squarish shape and decidedly longish, as I think the head itself was (its "length" going horizontal) ; he was large-boned, lean, but still firm-knit, tall, and strong-looking when he stood ; a right good old steel-grey figure, with rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a vivacious *strength* looking through him which might have suited one of those old steel-grey *Markgrafs* [Graf = *Grau*, "Steel-grey"] whom Henry the Fowler set up to ward the "marches," and do battle with the intrusive heathen, in a stalwart and judicious manner.'

Whoever might be his friends within an easy walk, or dwelling afar, the poet knew how to live his own life. The three fine sonnets headed *Personal Talk*, so well known, so warmly accepted in our better hours, so easily forgotten in hours not so good, between pleasant levities and grinding preoccupations, show us how little his neighbours had to do with the poet's genial seasons of 'smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought.'

For those days Wordsworth was a considerable traveller. Between 1820 and 1837 he made long tours abroad, to Switzerland, to Holland, to Belgium, to Italy. In other years he visited Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. He was no mechanical tourist, admiring to order and marvelling by regulation; and he confessed to Mrs. Fletcher that he fell asleep before the Venus de Medici at Florence. But the product of these wanderings is to be seen in some of his best sonnets, such as the first on Calais Beach, the famous one on Westminster Bridge, the second of the two on Bruges, where 'the Spirit of Antiquity mounts to the seat of grace within the mind—a deeper peace than that in deserts found'—and in some other fine pieces.

In weightier matters than mere travel, Wordsworth showed himself no mere recluse. He watched the great affairs then being transacted in Europe with the ardent interest of his youth, and his sonnets to Liberty, commemorating the attack by France upon the Swiss, the fate of Venice, the struggle of Hofer, the resistance of Spain, give no unworthy expression to some of the best of the many and varied motives that animated England in her long struggle with Bonaparte. The sonnet to Toussaint l'Ouverture concludes with some of the noblest lines in the English language. The strong verses on the expected death of Mr. Fox are alive with a magnanimous public spirit that goes deeper than the accidents of political opinion. In his young days he had sent Fox a copy of the *Lyrical Ballads*, with a long letter indicating his sense of Fox's great and generous qualities. Pitt he admits that he could never regard with complacency. 'I believe him, however,' he said, 'to have been as disinterested a man, and as true a lover of his country, as it was possible for so ambitious a man to be. His first wish (though probably unknown to himself) was that his country should prosper under his administration; his next that it should prosper. Could the order of these wishes have been reversed, Mr. Pitt would have avoided many of the grievous mistakes into which, I think, he fell.' 'You always went away from Burke,' he once told Haydon, 'with your mind filled; from Fox with your feelings excited; and from Pitt with wonder at his having had the power to make the worse appear the better reason.'

Of the poems composed under the influence of that best kind of patriotism which ennobles local attachments by associating them with the lasting elements of moral grandeur and heroism it is needless to speak. They have long taken their place as something higher even than literary classics. As years began to dull the old penetration of a mind which had once approached, like other youths, the shield of human nature from the golden side, and had been eager to 'clear a passage for just government,' Wordsworth lost his interest in progress. Waterloo may be taken for the date at which his social grasp began to fail, and with it his poetic glow. He opposed Catholic emancipation as stubbornly as Eldon, and the Reform Bill as bitterly as Croker. For the practical reforms of his day, even in education, for which he had always spoken up, Wordsworth was not a force. His heart clung to England as he found it. 'This concrete attachment to the scenes about him,' says F. W. H. Myers, 'had always formed an important element in his character. Ideal politics, whether in Church or State, had never occupied his mind, which sought rather to find its informing principles embodied in the England of his own day.' This flowed, we may suppose, from Burke. In a passage in the seventh Book of the *Prelude*, he describes, in lines a little prosaic but quite true, how he sat, saw, and heard, not unthankful nor uninspired, the great orator

> While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth
> Against all systems built on abstract rights.

The Church, as conceived by the spirit of Laud, and described by Hooker's voice, was the great symbol of the union of high and stable institution with thought, faith, right living, and 'sacred religion, mother of form and fear.' As might be expected from such a point of view, the church pieces, to which Wordsworth gave so much thought, are, with few exceptions, such as the sonnet on Seathwaite Chapel, formal, hard, and very thinly enriched with spiritual graces or unction. They are ecclesiastical, not religious. In religious poetry, the Church of England finds her most affecting voice, not in Wordsworth, but in the *Lyra Innocentium* and the *Christian Year*. Wordsworth abounds in the true devotional cast of mind, but less than anywhere else does it show in his properly ecclesiastical verse.

It was perhaps natural that when events no longer inspired him, Wordsworth should have turned with new feelings towards the classic, and discovered a virtue in classic form to which his own method had hitherto made him a little blind. Towards the date of Waterloo, he read over again some of the Latin writers, in attempting to prepare his son for college. He even at a later date set about a translation of the *Aeneid* of Virgil, but the one permanent result of the classic movement in his mind is *Laodamia*. Earlier in life he had translated some books of Ariosto at the rate of a hundred lines a day, and he even attempted fifteen of the sonnets of Michael Angelo, but so much meaning is compressed into so little room in those pieces that he found the difficulty insurmountable. He had a high opinion of the resources of the Italian language. The poetry of Dante and of Michael Angelo, he said, proves that if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the authors and not in the tongue.

Our last glimpse of Wordsworth in the full and peculiar power of his genius is the Ode *Composed on an evening of extraordinary splendour and beauty.* It is the one exception to the critical dictum that all his good work was done in the decade between 1798 and 1808. He lived for more than thirty years after this fine composition. But he added nothing more of value to the work that he had already done. The public appreciation of it was very slow. The most influential among the critics were for long hostile and contemptuous. Never at any time did Wordsworth come near to such popularity as that of Scott or of Byron. Nor was this all. For many years most readers of poetry thought more even of *Lalla Rookh* than of the *Excursion.* While Scott, Byron, and Moore were receiving thousands of pounds, Wordsworth received nothing. Between 1830 and 1840 the current turned in Wordsworth's direction, and when he received the honour of a Doctor's degree at the Oxford Commemoration in 1839, the Sheldonian theatre made him the hero of the day. In the spring of 1843 Southey died, and Sir Robert Peel pressed Wordsworth to succeed him in the office of Poet

Laureate. 'It is a tribute of respect,' said the Minister, 'justly due to the first of living poets.' But almost immediately the light of his common popularity was eclipsed by Tennyson, as it had earlier been eclipsed by Scott, by Byron, and in some degree by Shelley. Yet his fame among those who know, among competent critics with a right to judge, to-day stands higher than it ever stood. Only two writers have contributed so many lines of daily popularity and application. In the handbooks of familiar quotations Wordsworth fills more space than anybody save Shakespeare and Pope. He exerted commanding influence over great minds that have powerfully affected our generation. 'I never before,' said George Eliot in the days when her character was forming itself (1839), 'met with so many of my own feelings expressed just as I should like them,' and her reverence for Wordsworth remained to the end. J. S. Mill has described how important an event in his life was his first reading of Wordsworth. 'What made his poems a medicine for my state of mind was that they expressed not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. I needed to be made to feel that there was real permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with greatly increased interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings' (*Autobiog.*, 148). This effect of Wordsworth on Mill is the very illustration of the phrase of a poet of a later day, one of the most eminent and by his friends best beloved of all those whom Wordsworth had known, and on whom he poured out a generous portion of his own best spirit:—

> Time may restore us in his course
> Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force:
> But where will Europe's latter hour
> Again find Wordsworth's healing power?

It is the power for which Matthew Arnold found this happy designation that compensates us for that absence of excitement of which the heedless complain in Wordsworth's verse—excitement so often meaning mental fever, hysterics, distorted passion, or other fitful agitation of the soul.

Pretensions are sometimes advanced as to Wordsworth's historic position, which involve a mistaken view of literary history. Thus, we are gravely told by the too zealous Wordsworthian that the so-called poets of the eighteenth century were simply men of letters; they had various accomplishments and great general ability, but their thoughts were expressed in prose, or in mere metrical diction, which passed current as poetry without being so. Yet Burns belonged wholly to the eighteenth century (1759–96), and no verse-writer is so little literary as Burns, so little prosaic; no writer more truly poetic in melody, diction, thought, feeling, and spontaneous song. It was Burns who showed Wordsworth's own youth

'How verse may build a princely throne on humble truth.' Nor can we understand how Cowper is to be set down as simply a man of letters. We may, too, if we please, deny the name of poetry to Collins's tender and pensive *Ode to Evening*; but we can only do this on critical principles, which would end in classing the author of *Lycidas* and *Comus*, of the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, as a writer of various accomplishments and great general ability, but at bottom simply a man of letters and by no means a poet. It is to Gray, however, that we must turn for the distinctive character of the best poetry of the eighteenth century. With reluctance we will surrender the *Pindaric Odes*, though not without risking the observation that some of Wordsworth's own criticism on Gray is as narrow and as much beside the mark as Jeffrey's on the *Excursion*. But the *Ode on Eton College* is not to have grudged to it the noble name and true quality of poetry, merely because, as one of Johnson's most unfortunate criticisms expresses it, the *Ode* suggests nothing to Gray which every beholder does not equally think and feel. To find beautiful and pathetic language, set to harmonious numbers, for the common impressions of meditative minds, is no small part of the poet's task. That part has never been achieved by any poet in any tongue with more complete perfection and success than in the immortal *Elegy*, of which we may truly say that it has for nearly two centuries given to greater multitudes of men more of the exquisite pleasure of poetry than any other single piece in all the glorious treasury of English verse. It abounds, as Johnson says, 'with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.' These moving commonplaces of the human lot Gray approached through books and studious contemplation; not, as Wordsworth approached them, by daily contact with the lives and habit of men and the forces and magical apparitions of external nature. But it is a narrow view to suppose that the men of the eighteenth century did not look through the literary conventions of the day to the truths of life and nature behind them. The conventions have gone, or are changed, and we are all glad of it. Wordsworth effected a wholesome deliverance when he attacked the artificial diction, the personifications, the allegories, the antitheses, the barren rhymes and monotonous metres, which the reigning taste had approved. But while welcoming the new freshness, sincerity, and direct and fertile return on nature, that is a very bad reason why we should disparage poetry so genial, so simple, so humane, and so perpetually pleasing, as the best verse of the rationalistic century.

What Wordsworth did was to deal with themes that had been partially handled by precursors and contemporaries, in a larger and more devoted spirit, with wider amplitude of illustration, and with the steadfastness and persistency of a religious teacher. 'Every great poet is a teacher,' he said; 'I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing.' It may be doubted whether his general proposition is at all true, and whether it is any more the essential business of a poet to be a teacher than it was the business of Handel, Beethoven, or Mozart. They attune the soul to high states of feeling; the direct lesson is often as naught. But of himself no view could be more sound. He is a teacher, or he is nothing. 'To console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and sincerely virtuous'—that was his vocation; to show that the mutual adaptation of the external world and the inner mind is able to shape a paradise from the 'simple produce of the common day'—that was his high argument.

Simplification was, as I have said elsewhere, the keynote of the revolutionary time. Wordsworth was its purest exponent, but he had one remarkable peculiarity, which made him, in England at least, not only its purest but its greatest. While leading men to pierce below the artificial and conventional to the natural man and natural life, as Rousseau did, Wordsworth still cherished the symbols, the traditions, and the great institutes of social order. Simplification of life and thought and feeling was to be accomplished without summoning up the dangerous spirit of destruction and revolt. Wordsworth lived with nature, yet waged no angry railing war against society.

The chief opposing force to Wordsworth in literature was Byron. Whatever he was in his heart, Byron in his work was drawn by all the forces of his character, genius, and circumstances to the side of violent social change, and hence the extraordinary popularity of Byron in the continental camp of emancipation. Communion with nature is in Wordsworth's doctrine the school of duty. With Byron nature is the mighty consoler and the vindicator of the rebel.

A curious thing, which we may note in passing, is that Wordsworth, who clung fervently to the historic foundations of society as it stands, was wholly indifferent to history; while Byron, on the contrary, as the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold* is enough to show, had at least the sentiment of history in as great a degree as any poet that ever lived, and has given to it by far the most magnificent expression. No doubt, it was history on its romantic, rather than its philosophic or its political side.

On Wordsworth's exact position in the hierarchy of sovereign poets, a deep difference of estimate still divides even the most excellent judges. Nobody now dreams of placing him so low as the *Edinburgh Reviewers* did, nor so high as Southey placed him when he wrote to the author of *Philip van Artevelde* in 1829 that a greater poet than Wordsworth there never has been nor ever will be. An extravagance of this kind was only the outburst of generous friendship. Coleridge deliberately placed Wordsworth 'nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton, yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own.' Arnold, himself a poet of rare and memorable quality, declares his firm belief that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Dryden, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Goldsmith, Burns, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats—'Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all.' F. W. H. Myers, also a poet, and the author of a volume on Wordsworth as much distinguished by insight as by admirable literary grace and power, talks of 'a Plato, a Dante, a Wordsworth,' all three in a breath, as stars of equal magnitude in the great spiritual firmament. To Swinburne, on the contrary, all these panegyrical estimates savour of monstrous and intolerable exaggeration. Amid these contentions of celestial minds it will be safest to content ourselves with one or two plain observations in the humble positive degree, without hurrying into high and final comparatives and superlatives.

One admission is generally made at the outset. Whatever definition of poetry we fix upon, whether that it is the language of passion or imagination formed into regular numbers; or, with Milton, that it should be 'simple, sensuous, impassioned'; in any case there are great tracts in Wordsworth which, by no definition and on no terms, can be called poetry.

If we say with Shelley, that poetry is what redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man, and is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds, then are we bound to agree that Wordsworth records too many moments that are not specially good or happy, that he redeems from decay frequent visitations that are not from any particular divinity in man, and treats them all as very much on a level. Arnold is undoubtedly right in his view that, to be receivable as a classic, Wordsworth must be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage that now encumbers him.

The faults and hindrances in Wordsworth's poetry are obvious to every reader. For one thing, the intention to instruct, to improve the occasion, is too deliberate and too hardly pressed. 'We hate poetry,' said Keats, 'that has a palpable design upon us. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive.' Charles Lamb's friendly remonstrance on one of Wordsworth's poems is applicable to more of them: 'The instructions conveyed in it are too direct; they don't slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter.'

Then, except the sonnets and half a score of the pieces where he reaches his topmost height, there are few of his poems that are not too long, and it often happens even that no degree of reverence for the teacher prevents one from finding passages of almost unbearable prolixity. A defence was once made by a great artist for what, to the unregenerate mind, seemed the merciless tardiness of movement in one of Goethe's romances, that it was meant to impress on his readers the slow march and the tedium of events in human life. The lenient reader may give Wordsworth the advantage of the same ingenious explanation. We may venture on a counsel which is more to the point, in warning the student that not seldom in these blocks of afflicting prose, suddenly we come upon some of the profoundest and most beautiful passages that the poet ever wrote. In deserts of preaching we find, almost within sight of one another, delightful oases of purest poetry. Besides being prolix, Wordsworth is often cumbrous; has often no flight; is not liquid, is not musical. He is heavy and self-conscious with the burden of his message. How much at his best he is, when, as in the admirable and truly Wordsworthian poem of *Michael*, he spares us a sermon and leaves us the story. Then, he is apt to wear a somewhat stiff-cut garment of solemnity, when not solemnity, but either sternness or sadness, which are so different things, would seem the fitter mood. In truth Wordsworth hardly knows how to be stern, as Dante or Milton was stern; nor has he the note of plangent sadness which strikes the ear in men as morally inferior to him as Rousseau, Keats, Shelley, or Coleridge; nor has he the Olympian air with which Goethe delivered sage oracles. This mere solemnity is specially oppressive in some parts of the *Excursion*—the performance where we best see the whole poet, and where the poet most absolutely identifies himself with his subject. Yet, even in the midst of these solemn discoursings, he suddenly introduces an episode in which his peculiar power is at its height. There is no better instance of this than the passage in the second Book of the *Excursion*, where he describes with a fidelity, at once realistic and poetic, the worn-out almsman, his patient life and sorry death, and then the unimaginable vision in the skies, as they brought the ancient man down through dull mists from the mountain ridge to die. These hundred and seventy lines are like the landscape in which they were composed; you can no more appreciate the beauty of the one by a single or a second perusal, than you can the other in a scamper through the vale on the box of the coach. But any lover of poetry who will submit himself with leisure and meditation to the impressions of the story, the pity of it, the naturalness of it, the glory and the mystic splendours of the indifferent heavens, will feel that here indeed is the true strength which out of the trivial raises expression for the pathetic and the sublime.

Apart, however, from excess of prolixity and of solemnity, can it be really contended that in purely poetic quality—in aerial freedom and space, in radiant purity of light or depth and variety of colour, in penetrating and subtle sweetness of music, in supple mastery of the instrument, in vivid spontaneity of imagination, in clean-cut sureness of touch—Wordsworth is not surpassed by men who were below him in weight and greatness? Even in his own field of the simple and the pastoral has he touched so sweet and spontaneous a note as Burns's *Daisy*, or the *Mouse*? When men seek immersion or absorption in the atmosphere of pure poesy, without lesson or moral, or anything but delight of fancy and stir of imagination, they will find him less congenial to their mood than poets not worthy to loose the latchet of his shoe in the greater elements of his art. In all these comparisons, it is not merely Wordsworth's theme and motive and dominant note that are different; the skill of hand is different, and the musical ear and the imaginative eye.

To maintain or to admit so much as this, however, is not to say the last word. The question is whether Wordsworth, however unequal to Shelley in lyric quality, to Coleridge or to Keats in imaginative quality, to Burns in tenderness, warmth, and that humour which is so nearly akin to pathos, to Byron in vividness and energy, yet possesses excellences of his own which place him in other respects above these master-spirits of his time. If the question is to be answered affirmatively, it is clear that only in one direction must we look. The trait that really places Wordsworth on an eminence above his poetic contemporaries, and ranks him, as the ages are likely to rank him, on a line just short of the greatest of all time, is his direct appeal to will and conduct. 'There is volition and self-government in every line of his poetry, and his best thoughts come from his steady resistance to the ebb and flow of ordinary desires and regrets. He contests the ground inch by inch with all despondent and indolent humours, and often, too, with movements of inconsiderate and wasteful joy' (R. H. Hutton). That would seem to be his true distinction and superiority over men to whom more had been given of fire, passion, and ravishing music. Those who deem the end of poetry to be intoxication, fever, or rainbow dreams, can care little for Wordsworth. If its end be not intoxication, but on the contrary a search from the wide regions of imagination and feeling for elements of composure deep and pure, and of self-government in a far loftier sense than the merely prudential, then Wordsworth has a gift of his own in which he was approached by no poet of his time. Scott's sane and humane genius, with much the same aims, yet worked with different methods. He once remonstrated with Lockhart for being too apt to measure things by some reference to literature. 'I have read books enough,' said Scott, 'and observed and conversed with enough of eminent and splendidly cultivated minds; but I assure you, I have heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism under difficulties and afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the lot of friends and neighbours, than I ever yet met with out of the pages of the Bible. We shall never learn to respect our real calling and destiny, unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine compared with the education of the heart.' This admirable deliverance of Scott's is, so far as it goes, eminently Wordsworthian; but Wordsworth went higher and further, striving not only to move the sympathies of the heart, but to enlarge the understanding, and exalt and widen the spiritual vision, all with the aim of leading us towards firmer and austerer self-control.

Certain favourers of Wordsworth answer our question with a triumphant affirmative, on the strength of some ethical, or metaphysical, or theological system which they believe themselves to find in him. But is it credible that poets can permanently live by systems? Or is not system, whether ethical, theological, or philosophical, the heavy lead of poetry? Lucretius is indisputably one of the mighty poets of the world, but Epicureanism is not the soul of that majestic muse. So with Wordsworth. Thought is, on the whole, predominant over feeling in his verse, but a prevailing atmosphere of deep and solemn reflection does not make a system. His theology and his ethics, and his so-called Platonical metaphysics, have as little to do with the power of his poetry over us, as the imputed Arianism or any other aspect of the theology of *Paradise Lost* has to do with the strength and the sublimity of Milton, and his claim to a high perpetual place in the hearts of men. It is best to be entirely sceptical as to the existence of system and ordered philosophy in Wordsworth. When he tells us that 'one impulse from a vernal wood may teach you more of man, of moral evil and of good, than all the sages can,' such a proposition cannot be seriously taken as more than a half-playful sally for the benefit of some too bookish friend. No impulse from a vernal wood can teach us anything at all of moral evil and of good. When he says that it is his faith, 'that every flower enjoys the air it breathes,' and that when the budding twigs spread out their fan to catch the air, he is compelled to think 'that there was pleasure there,' he expresses a charming poetic fancy and no more, and it is idle to pretend to see in it the fountain of a system of philosophy. In the famous *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, the poet doubtless does point to a set of philosophic ideas, more or less complete; but the thought from which he sets out, that our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting, and that we are less and less able to perceive the visionary gleam, less and less alive to the glory and the dream of external nature, as infancy recedes further from us, is, with all respect for the declaration of Ruskin to the contrary, contrary to notorious fact, experience, and truth. It is a beggarly conception, no doubt, to judge as if poetry should always be capable of a prose rendering; but it is at least fatal to the philosophic pretension of a line or a stanza if, when it is fairly reduced to prose, the prose discloses that it is nonsense, and there is at least one stanza of the great *Ode* that this doom would assuredly await. Wordsworth's claim, his special gift, his lasting contribution, lies in the extraordinary strenuousness, sincerity, and insight with which he first idealises and glorifies the vast universe around us, and then makes of it, not a theatre on which men play their parts, but an animate presence, intermingling with our works, pouring its companionable spirit about us, and 'breathing grandeur upon the very humblest face of human life.' This twofold and conjoint performance, consciously and expressly—perhaps only too consciously—undertaken by a man of strong inborn sensibility to natural impressions, and systematically carried out in a lifetime of brooding meditation and active composition, is Wordsworth's distinguishing title to fame and gratitude. In 'words that speak of nothing more than what we are,' he revealed new faces of nature; he dwelt on men as they are, men themselves; he strove to do that which has been declared to be the true secret of force in art, to make the trivial serve the expression of the sublime. 'Wordsworth's distinctive work,' Ruskin has justly said (*Modern Painters*, iii. 293), 'was a war with pomp and pretence, and a display of the majesty of simple feelings and humble hearts, together with high reflective truth in his analysis of the courses of politics and ways of men; without these, his love of nature would have been comparatively worthless.'

Yet let us not forget that he possessed the gift which to an artist is the very root of the matter. He saw Nature truly, he saw her as she is, and with his own eyes. The critic whom I have just quoted boldly pronounces him 'the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature.' When he describes the daisy, casting the beauty of its star-shaped shadow on the smooth stone, or the boundless depth of the abysses of the sky, or the clouds made vivid as fire by the rays of light, every touch is true, not the copying of a literary phrase, but the result of direct observation.

It is true that Nature has sides to which Wordsworth was not energetically alive—Nature 'red in tooth and claw.' He was not energetically alive to the blind and remorseless cruelties of life and the world. When in early spring he heard the blended notes of the birds, and saw the budding twigs and primrose tufts, it grieved him, amid such fair works of Nature, to think 'what man has made of man.' As if Nature herself, excluding the conscious doings of that portion of Nature which is the human race, and excluding also Nature's own share in the making of poor Man, did not abound in raking cruelties and horrors of her own. '*Edel sei der Mensch,*' sang Goethe in a noble psalm, '*Hülfreich und gut, Denn das allein Unterscheidet ihn, Von allen Wesen Die wir kennen.*' '*Let man be noble, helpful, and good, for that alone distinguishes him from all beings that we know. No feeling has nature: to good and bad gives the sun his light, and for the evildoer as for the best shine moon and stars.*' That the laws which Nature has fixed for our lives are mighty and eternal, Wordsworth comprehended as fully as Goethe, but not that they are laws pitiless as iron. Wordsworth had not rooted in him the sense of Fate—of the inexorable sequences of things, of the terrible chain that so often binds an awful end to some slight and trivial beginning.

This optimism or complacency in Wordsworth will be understood if we compare his spirit and treatment with that of the illustrious French painter whose subjects and whose life were in some ways akin to his own. Millet, like Wordsworth, went to the realities of humble life for his inspiration. The peasant of the great French plains and the forest was to him what the Cumbrian dalesman was to Wordsworth. But he saw the peasant differently. 'You watch figures in the fields,' said Millet, 'digging and delving with spade or pick. You see one of them from time to time straightening his loins, and wiping his face with the back of his hand. Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow. Is that the gay lively labour in which some people would have you believe? Yet it is there that for me you must seek true humanity and great poetry. They say that I deny the charm of the country; I find in it far more than charms, I find infinite splendours. I see in it, just as they do, the little flowers of which Christ said that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. I see clearly enough the sun as he spreads his splendour amid the clouds. None the less do I see on the plain, all smoking, the horses at the plough. I see in some stony corner a man all worn out, whose *han han* have been heard ever since daybreak—trying to straighten himself a moment to get breath.' The hardness, the weariness, the sadness, the ugliness, out of which Millet's consummate skill made pictures that affect us like strange music, were to Wordsworth not the real part of the thing. They were all absorbed in the thought of Nature as a whole, wonderful, mighty, harmonious, and benign.

We are not called upon to place great men of his stamp as if they were collegians in a class-list. It is best to take with thankfulness and admiration from each man what he has to give. What Wordsworth does is to assuage, to reconcile, to fortify. He has not Shakespeare's richness and vast compass, nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, ardent force of vision. Probably he is too deficient in clear beauty of form and in concentrated power to be classed by the ages among these great giants. We cannot be sure. We may leave it to the ages to decide. But Wordsworth, at any rate, by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to touch 'the depth and not the tumult of the soul,' to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure. All art or poetry that has the effect of breathing into men's hearts, even if it be only for a space, these moods of settled peace, and strongly confirming their judgment and their will for good,—whatever limitations may be found besides, however prosaic may be some or much of the detail,—is great art and noble poetry, and the creator of it will always hold, as Wordsworth holds, a sovereign title to the reverence and gratitude of mankind.

MACAULAY.

'After glancing my eye over the design and order of a new book,' says Gibbon, 'I suspended the perusal till I had finished the task of self-examination, till I had revolved in a solitary walk all that I knew or believed or had thought on the subject of the whole work or of some particular chapter; I was then qualified to discern how much the author added to my original stock; and if I was sometimes satisfied by the agreement, I was sometimes warned by the opposition of our ideas.' It is also told of Strafford that before reading any book for the first time, he would call for a sheet of paper, and then proceed to write down upon it some sketch of the ideas that he already had upon the subject of the book, and of the questions that he expected to find answered. No one who has been at the pains to try the experiment, will doubt the usefulness of this practice: it gives to our acquisitions from books clearness and reality, a right place and an independent shape. At this moment (1876) we are all looking for the biography of an illustrious man of letters, written by a near kinsman, who is himself naturally endowed with keen literary interests, and who has invigorated his academic cultivation by practical engagement in considerable affairs of public business. Before taking up Mr. Trevelyan's two volumes, it is perhaps worth while, on Strafford's plan, to ask ourselves shortly what kind of significance or value belongs to Lord Macaulay's achievements, and to what place he has a claim among the forces of English literature. It is seventeen years since he died, and those of us who never knew him nor ever saw him, may now think about his work with that perfect detachment which is impossible in the case of actual contemporaries.[1]

That Macaulay comes in the very front rank in the mind of the ordinary bookbuyer of our day is quite certain. It is an amusement with some people to put an imaginary case of banishment to a desert island, with the privilege of choosing the works of one author, and no more than one, to furnish literary companionship and refreshment for the rest of a lifetime. Whom would one select for this momentous post? Clearly the author must be voluminous, for days on desert islands are many and long; he must be varied in his moods, his topics, and his interests; he must have a great deal to say, and must have a power of saying it that shall arrest a depressed and dolorous spirit. Englishmen, of course, would with mechanical unanimity call for Shakespeare; Germans could hardly hesitate about Goethe; and a sensible Frenchman would pack up the ninety volumes of Voltaire. It would be at least as interesting to know the object of a second choice, supposing the tyrant in his clemency to give us two authors. In the case of Englishmen there is some evidence as to a popular preference. A recent traveller in Australia informs us that the three books which he found on every squatter's shelf, and which at last he knew before he crossed the threshold that he should be sure to find, were Shakespeare, the Bible, and Macaulay's Essays. This is only an illustration of a feeling about Macaulay that has been almost universal among the English-speaking peoples.

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[1] Since the following piece was written, Mr. Trevelyan's biography of Lord Macaulay has appeared, and has enjoyed the great popularity to which its careful execution, its brightness of style, its good taste, its sound judgment, so richly entitle it. If Mr. Trevelyan's course in politics were not so useful as it is, one might be tempted to regret that he had not chosen literature for the main field of his career. The portrait which he draws of Lord Macaulay is so irresistibly attractive in many ways, that a critic may be glad to have delivered his soul before his judgment was subject to a dangerous bias, by the picture of Macaulay's personal character — its domestic amiability, its benevolence to unlucky followers of letters, its manliness, its high public spirit and generous patriotism. On reading my criticism over again, I am well pleased to find that not an epithet needs to be altered,—so independent is opinion as to this strong man's work, of our esteem for his loyal and upright character.

We may safely say that no man obtains and keeps for a great many years such a position as this, unless he is possessed of some very extraordinary qualities, or else of common qualities in a very uncommon and extraordinary degree. The world, says Goethe, is more willing to endure the Incongruous than to be patient under the Insignificant. Even those who set least value on what Macaulay does for his readers, may still feel bound to distinguish the elements that have given him his vast popularity. The inquiry is not a piece of merely literary criticism, for it is impossible that the work of so imposing a writer should have passed through the hands of every man and woman of his time who has even the humblest pretensions to cultivation, without leaving a very decided mark on their habits both of thought and expression. As a plain matter of observation, it is impossible to take up a newspaper or a review, for instance, without perceiving Macaulay's influence both on the style and the temper of modern journalism, and journalism in its turn acts upon the style and temper of its enormous uncounted public. The man who now succeeds in catching the ear of the writers of leading articles, is in the position that used to be held by the head of some great theological school, whence disciples swarmed forth to reproduce in ten thousand pulpits the arguments, the opinions, the images, the tricks, the postures, and the mannerisms of a single master.

Two men of very different kinds have thoroughly impressed the journalists of our time, Macaulay and Mill. Carlyle we do not add to them; he is, as the Germans call Jean Paul, *der Einzige*. And he is a poet, while the other two are in their degrees serious and argumentative writers, dealing in different ways with the great topics that constitute the matter and business of daily discussion. They are both of them practical enough to interest men handling real affairs, and yet they are general or theoretical enough to supply such men with the large and ready commonplaces which are so useful to a profession that has to produce literary graces and philosophical decorations at an hour's notice. It might perhaps be said of these two distinguished men that our public writers owe most of their virtues to the one, and most of their vices to the other. If Mill taught some of them to reason, Macaulay tempted more of them to declaim: if Mill set an example of patience, tolerance, and fair examination of hostile opinions, Macaulay did much to encourage oracular arrogance, and a rather too thrasonical complacency; if Mill sowed ideas of the great economic, political, and moral bearings of the forces of society, Macaulay trained a taste for superficial particularities, trivial circumstantialities of local colour, and all the paraphernalia of the pseudo-picturesque.

Of course nothing so obviously untrue is meant as that this is an account of Macaulay's own quality. What is empty pretension in the leading article, was often a warranted self-assertion in Macaulay; what in it is little more than testiness, is in him often a generous indignation. What became and still remain in those who have made him their model, substantive and organic vices, the foundation of literary character and intellectual temper, were in him the incidental defects of a vigorous genius. And we have to take a man of his power and vigour with all his drawbacks, for the one are wrapped up in the other. Charles Fox used to apply to Burke a passage that Quintilian wrote about Ovid. 'Si animi sui affectibus temperare quam indulgere maluisset,' quoted Fox, 'quid vir iste præstare non potuerit!' But this is really not at all certain either of Ovid, or Burke, or any one else. It suits moralists to tell us that excellence lies in the happy mean and nice balance of our faculties and impulses, and perhaps in so far as our own contentment and an easy passage through life are involved, what they tell us is true. But for making a mark in the world, for rising to supremacy in art or thought or affairs—whatever those aims may be worth—a man possibly does better to indulge, rather than to chide or grudge, his genius, and to pay the penalties for his weakness, rather than run any risk of mutilating those strong faculties of which they happen to be an inseparable accident. Versatility is not a universal gift among the able men of the world; not many of them have so many gifts of the spirit, as to be free to choose by what pass they will climb 'the steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar.' If Macaulay had applied himself to the cultivation of a balanced judgment, of tempered phrases, and of relative propositions, he would probably have sunk into an impotent tameness. A great pugilist has sometimes been converted from the error of his ways, and been led zealously to cherish gospel graces, but the hero's discourses have seldom had the notes of unction and edification. Macaulay, divested of all the exorbitancies of his spirit and his style, would have been a Samson shorn of the locks of his strength.

Although, however, a writer of marked quality may do well to let his genius develop its spontaneous forces without too assiduous or vigilant repression, trusting to other writers of equal strength in other directions, and to the general fitness of things and operation of time, to redress the balance, still it is the task of criticism in counting up the contributions of one of these strong men to examine the mischiefs no less than the benefits incident to their work. There is no puny carping nor cavilling in the process. It is because such men are strong that they are able to do harm; they may injure the taste and judgment of a whole generation, just because they are never mediocre. That is implied in strength. Macaulay is not to be measured now merely as if he were the author of a new book. His influence has been a distinct literary force, and in an age of reading, this is to be a distinct force in deciding the temper, the process, the breadth, of men's opinions, no less than the manner of expressing them. It is no new observation that the influence of an author becomes in time something apart from his books: a certain generalised or abstract personality impresses itself on our minds, long after we have forgotten the details of his opinions, the arguments by which he enforced them, and even, what are usually the last to escape us, the images by which he illustrated them. Phrases and sentences are a mask: but we detect the features of the man behind the mask. This personality of a favourite author is a real and powerful agency. Unconsciously we are infected with his humours; we apply his methods; we find ourselves copying the rhythm and measure of his periods; we wonder how he would have acted, or thought, or spoken in our circumstances. Usually a strong writer leaves a special mark in some particular region of mental activity: the final product of him is to fix some persistent religious mood, or some decisive intellectual bias, or else some trick of the tongue. Now Macaulay has contributed no philosophic ideas to the speculative stock, nor has he developed any one great historic or social truth. His work is always full of a high spirit of manliness, probity, and honour; but he is not of that small band to whom we may apply Mackintosh's thrice and four times enviable panegyric on the eloquence of Dugald Stewart, that its peculiar glory consisted in having 'breathed the love of virtue into whole generations of pupils.' He has painted many striking pictures, and imparted a certain reality to our conception of many great scenes of the past. He did good service in banishing once for all those sentimental Jacobite leanings and prejudices which had been kept alive by the sophistry of the most popular of historians, and the imagination of the most popular of romance writers. But he set his stamp upon style; style in its widest sense, not merely on the grammar and mechanism of writing, but on what De Quincey described as its *organology;* style, that is to say, in its relation to ideas and feelings, its commerce with thought, and its reaction on what one may call the temper or conscience of the intellect.

Let no man suppose that it matters little whether the most universally popular of the serious authors of a generation—and Macaulay was nothing less than this—affects *style coupé* or *style soutenu.* The critic of style is not the dancing-master, declaiming on the deep ineffable things that lie in a minuet. He is not the virtuoso of supines and gerundives. The morality of style goes deeper 'than dull fools suppose.' When Comte took pains to prevent any sentence from exceeding two lines of his manuscript or five of print; to restrict every paragraph to seven sentences; to exclude every hiatus between two sentences, or even between two paragraphs; and never to reproduce any word, except the auxiliary monosyllables, in two consecutive sentences; he justified his literary solicitude by insisting on the wholesomeness alike to heart and intelligence of submission to artificial institutions. He felt, after he had once mastered the habit of the new yoke, that it became the source of continual and unforeseeable improvements even in thought, and he perceived that the reason why verse is a higher kind of literary perfection than prose, is that verse imposes a greater number of rigorous forms. We may add that verse itself is perfected, in the hands of men of poetic genius, in proportion to the severity of this mechanical regulation. Where Pope or Racine had one rule of metre, Victor Hugo has twenty, and he observes them as rigorously as an algebraist or an astronomer observes the rules of calculation or demonstration. One, then, who touches the style of a generation, acquires no trifling authority over its thought and temper, as well as over the length of its sentences.

The first and most obvious secret of Macaulay's place on popular bookshelves is that he has a true genius for narration, and narration will always in the eyes, not only of our squatters in the Australian bush, but of the many all over the world, stand first among literary gifts. The common run of plain men, as has been noticed since the beginning of the world, are as eager as children for a story, and like children they will embrace the man who will tell them a story, with abundance of details and plenty of colour, and a realistic assurance that it is no mere make-believe. Macaulay never stops to brood over an incident or a character, with an inner eye intent on penetrating to the lowest depth of motive and cause, to the furthest complexity of impulse, calculation, and subtle incentive. The spirit of analysis is not in him, and the divine spirit of meditation is not in him. His whole mind runs in action and movement; it busies itself with eager interest in all objective particulars. He is seized by the external and the superficial, and revels in every detail that appeals to the five senses. 'The brilliant Macaulay,' said Emerson, with slight exaggeration, 'who expresses the tone of the English governing classes of the day, explicitly teaches that *good* means good to eat, good to wear, material commodity.' So ready a faculty of exultation in the exceeding great glories of taste and touch, of loud sound and glittering spectacle, is a gift of the utmost service to the narrator who craves immense audiences. Let it be said that if Macaulay exults in the details that go to our five senses, his sensuousness is always clean, manly, and fit for honest daylight and the summer sun. There is none of that curious odour of autumnal decay that clings to the passion of a more modern school for colour and flavour and the enumerated treasures of subtle indulgence.

Mere picturesqueness, however, is a minor qualification compared with another quality which everybody assumes himself to have, but which is in reality extremely uncommon; the quality, I mean, of telling a tale directly and in straightforward order. In speaking of Hallam, Macaulay complained that Gibbon had brought into fashion an unpleasant trick of telling a story by implication and allusion. This provoking obliquity has certainly increased rather than declined since Hallam's day. Froude, it is true, whatever may be his shortcomings on the side of sound moral and political judgment, has admirable gifts in the way of straightforward narration, and Freeman, when he does not press too hotly after emphasis, and abstains from overloading his account with superabundance of detail, is usually excellent in the way of direct description. Still, most people would say of him that he is unequalled in our time in his mastery of the art of letting us know in an express and unmistakable way exactly what it was that happened; though it is quite true that in many portions of his too elaborated *History of William the Third* he describes a large number of events about which, I think, no sensible man can in the least care either how they happened, or whether indeed they happened at all.

Another reason why people have sought Macaulay is, that he has in one way or another something to tell them about many of the most striking personages and interesting events in the history of mankind. And he does really tell them something. If any one will be at the trouble to count up the number of those names that belong to the world and time, about which Macaulay has found not merely something, but something definite and pointed to say, he will be astonished to see how large a portion of the wide historic realm is traversed in that ample flight of reference, allusion, and illustration, and what unsparing copiousness of knowledge gives substance, meaning, and attraction to that resplendent blaze of rhetoric.

Macaulay came upon the world of letters just as the middle classes were expanding into enormous prosperity, were vastly increasing in numbers, and were becoming more alive to literary interests than they had ever been before. His Essays are as good as a library: they make an incomparable manual and vade-mecum for a busy uneducated man, who has curiosity and enlightenment enough to wish to know a little about the great lives and great thoughts, the shining words and many-coloured complexities of action that have marked the journey of man through the ages. Macaulay had an intimate acquaintance both with the imaginative literature and the history of Greece and Rome, with the literature and the history of modern Italy, of France, and of England. Whatever his special subject, he contrives to pour into it with singular dexterity a stream of rich, graphic, and telling illustrations from these widely diversified sources. Figures from history, ancient and modern, sacred and secular; characters from plays and novels from Plautus down to Walter Scott and Jane Austen; images and similes from poets of every age and every nation, 'pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical'; shrewd thrusts from satirists, wise saws from sages, pleasantries caustic or pathetic from humorists; all these throng Macaulay's pages with the bustle and variety and animation of some glittering masque and cosmoramic revel of great books and heroic men. Hence, though Macaulay was in mental constitution one of the very least Shakespearean writers that ever lived, yet he has the Shakespearean quality of taking his reader through an immense gallery of interesting characters and striking situations. No writer can now expect to attain the widest popularity as a man of letters unless he gives to the world *multa* as well as *multum.* Sainte-Beuve, the most eminent man of letters in France in his generation, wrote no less than twenty-seven volumes of his incomparable *Causeries.* Carlyle, the most eminent man of letters in England in his generation, has taught us in thirty volumes that silence is golden. Macaulay was not so exuberantly copious as these two illustrious writers, but he had the art of being as various without being so voluminous.

There has been a great deal of deliberate and systematic imitation of Macaulay's style, often by clever men who might well have trusted to their own resources. Its most conspicuous vices are very easy to imitate, but it is impossible for any one who is less familiar with literature than Macaulay was, to reproduce his style effectively, for the reason that it is before all else the style of great literary knowledge. Nor is that all. Macaulay's knowledge was not only very wide; it was both thoroughly accurate and instantly ready. For this stream of apt illustrations he was indebted to his extraordinary memory, and his rapid eye for contrasts and analogies. They come to the end of his pen as he writes; they are not laboriously hunted out in indexes, and then added by way of afterthought and extraneous interpolation. Hence quotations and references that in a writer even of equal knowledge, but with his wits less promptly about him, would seem mechanical and awkward, find their place in a page of Macaulay as if by a delightful process of complete assimilation and spontaneous fusion.

We may be sure that no author could have achieved Macaulay's boundless popularity among his contemporaries, unless his work had abounded in what is substantially Commonplace. Addison puts fine writing in sentiments that are natural without being obvious, and this is a true account of the 'law' of the exquisite literature of the Queen Anne men. We may perhaps add to Addison's definition, that the great secret of the best kind of popularity is always the noble or imaginative handling of Commonplace. Shakespeare may at first seem an example to the contrary; and indeed is it not a standing marvel that the greatest writer of a nation distinguished among all nations for the pharisaism, puritanism, and unimaginative narrowness of its judgments on conduct and type of character, should be paramount over all writers for the breadth, maturity, fulness, subtlety, and infinite variousness of his conception of human life and nature? One possible answer to the perplexity is that the puritanism does not go below the surface in us, and that Englishmen are not really limited in their view by the too strait formulas supposed to contain their explanations of the moral universe. On this theory the popular appreciation of Shakespeare is the irrepressible response of the hearty inner man to a voice in which he recognises the full note of human nature, and those wonders of the world which are not dreamt of in his professed philosophy. A more obvious answer than this is that Shakespeare's popularity with the many is not due to those finer glimpses that are the very essence of all poetic delight to the few, but to his thousand other magnificent attractions, and above all, after his skill as a pure dramatist and master of scenic interest and situation, to the lofty or pathetic setting with which he vivifies, not the subtleties or refinements, but the commonest and most elementary traits of the commonest and most elementary human moods. The few with minds touched by nature or right cultivation to the finer issues, admire the supreme genius which takes some poor Italian tale, with its coarse plot and gross personages, and shooting it through with threads of variegated meditation, produces a masterpiece of penetrative reflection and high pensive suggestion as to the deepest things and most secret parts of the life of men. But to the general these finer threads are indiscernible. What touches them in the Shakespearean poetry, and most rightly touches us all, are topics eternally old, yet of eternal freshness, the perennial truisms of the grave and the bride-chamber, of shifting fortune, of the surprises of destiny, and the emptiness of the answered vow. This is the region in which the poet wins his widest if not his hardest triumphs, the region of the noble Commonplace.

A writer dealing with such matters as principally occupied Macaulay, has not the privilege of resort to these great poetic inspirations. Yet history, too, has its generous commonplaces, its plausibilities of emotion, and no one has ever delighted more than Macaulay did, to appeal to the fine truisms that cluster round love of freedom and love of native land. The high rhetorical topics of liberty and patriotism are his readiest instruments for kindling a glowing reflection of these magnanimous passions in the breasts of his readers. That Englishman is hardly to be envied who can read without a glow such passages as that in the *History*, about Turenne being startled by the shout of stern exultation with which his English allies advanced to the combat, and expressing the delight of a true soldier when he learned that it was ever the fashion of Cromwell's pikemen to rejoice greatly when they beheld the enemy; while even the banished cavaliers felt an emotion of national pride when they saw a brigade of their countrymen, outnumbered by foes and abandoned by friends, drive before it in headlong rout the finest infantry of Spain, and force a passage into a counterscarp which had just been pronounced impregnable by the ablest of the marshals of France. Such prose as this is not less thrilling to a man who loves his country, than the spirited verse of the *Lays of Ancient Rome*. And the commonplaces of patriotism and freedom would never have been so powerful in Macaulay's hands, if they had not been inspired by a sincere and hearty faith in them in the soul of the writer. His unanalytical turn of mind kept him free of any temptation to think of love of country as a prejudice, or a passion for freedom as an illusion. The cosmopolitan or international idea which such teachers as Cobden have tried to impress on our stubborn islanders, would have found in Macaulay not lukewarm or sceptical adherence, but point-blank opposition and denial. He believed as stoutly in the supremacy of Great Britain in the history of the good causes of Europe, as M. Thiers believes in the supremacy of France, or Mazzini believed in that of Italy. The thought of the prodigious industry, the inventiveness, the stout enterprise, the free government, the wise and equal laws, the noble literature, of this fortunate island and its majestic empire beyond the seas, and the discretion, valour, and tenacity by which all these great material and still greater intangible possessions had been first won, and then kept, against every hostile comer whether domestic or foreign, sent through Macaulay a thrill, like that which the thought of Paris and its heroisms moved in the great poet of France, or sight of the dear city of the Violet Crown moved in an Athenian of old. Thus habitually, with all sincerity of heart, to offer to one of the greater popular prepossessions the incense due to any other idol of superstition, sacred and of indisputable authority, and to let this adoration be seen shining in every page, is one of the keys that every man must find, who would make a quick and sure way into the temple of contemporary fame.

It is one of the first things to be said about Macaulay, that he was in exact accord with the common average sentiment of his day on every subject on which he spoke. His superiority was not of that highest kind which leads a man to march in thought on the outside margin of the crowd, watching them, sympathising with them, hoping for them, but apart. Macaulay was one of the middle-class crowd in his heart, and only rose above it by splendid attainments and extraordinary gifts of expression. He had none of that ambition which inflames some hardy men, to make new beliefs and new passions enter the minds of their neighbours; his ascendancy is due to literary pomp, not to fecundity of spirit. No one has ever surpassed him in the art of combining resolute and ostentatious common sense of a slightly coarse sort in choosing his point of view, with so considerable an appearance of dignity and elevation in setting it forth and impressing it upon others. The elaborateness of his style is very likely to mislead people into imagining for him a corresponding elaborateness of thought and sentiment. On the contrary, Macaulay's mind was really very simple, strait, and with as few notes in its register, to borrow a phrase from the language of vocal compass, as there are few notes, though they are very loud, in the register of his written prose. When we look more closely into it, what at first wore the air of dignity and elevation, in truth rather disagreeably resembles the narrow assurance of a man who knows that he has with him the great battalions of public opinion. We are always quite sure that if Macaulay had been an Athenian citizen towards the ninety-fifth Olympiad, he would have taken sides with Anytus and Meletus in the impeachment of Socrates. A popular author must, in a thoroughgoing way, take the accepted maxims for granted. He must suppress any whimsical fancy for applying the Socratic elenchus, or any other engine of criticism, scepticism, or verification, to those sentiments or current precepts of morals, that may in truth be very equivocal and may be much neglected in practice, but which the public opinion of his time requires to be treated in theory and in literature as if they had been cherished and held sacred *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus.*

This is just what Macaulay does, and it is commonly supposed to be no heavy fault in him or any other writer for the common public. Man cannot live by analysis alone, nor nourish himself on the secret delights of irony. And if Macaulay had only reflected the more generous of the prejudices of mankind, it would have been well enough. Burke, for instance, was a writer who revered the prejudices of a modern society as deeply as Macaulay did; he believed society to be founded on prejudices and held compact by them. Yet what size there is in Burke, what fine perspective, what momentum, what edification! It may be pleaded that there is the literature of edification, and there is the literature of knowledge, and that the qualities proper to the one cannot law-fully be expected from the other, and would only be very much out of place if they should happen to be found there. But there are two answers to this. First, Macaulay in the course of his varied writings discusses all sorts of ethical and other matters, and is not simply a chronicler of party and intrigue, of dynasties and campaigns. Second, and more than this, even if he had never travelled beyond the composition of historical record, he could still have sown his pages, as does every truly great writer, no matter what his subject may be, with those significant images or far-reaching suggestions, which suddenly light up a whole range of distant thoughts and sympathies within us; which in an instant affect the sensibilities of men with a something new and unforeseen; and which awaken, if only for a passing moment, the faculty and response of the diviner mind. Tacitus does all this, and Burke does it, and that is why men who care nothing for Roman despots or for Jacobin despots, will still perpetually turn to those writers almost as if they were on the level of great poets or very excellent spiritual teachers.

One secret is that they, and all such men as they were, had that of which Macaulay can hardly have had the rudimentary germ, the faculty of deep abstract meditation and surrender to the fruitful 'leisures of the spirit.' We can picture Macaulay talking, or making a speech in the House of Commons, or buried in a book, or scouring his library for references, or covering his blue foolscap with dashing periods, or accentuating his sentences and barbing his phrases; but can anybody think of him as meditating, as modestly pondering and wondering, as possessed for so much as ten minutes by that spirit of inwardness, that has never been wholly wanting in any of those kings and princes of literature, with whom it is good for men to sit in counsel? He seeks Truth, not as she should be sought, devoutly, tentatively, and with the air of one touching the hem of a sacred garment, but clutching her by the hair of the head and dragging her after him in a kind of boisterous triumph, a prisoner of war and not a goddess.

All this finds itself reflected, as the inner temper of a man always is reflected, in his style of written prose. The merits of Macaulay's prose are obvious enough. It naturally reproduces the good qualities of his understanding, its strength, manliness, and directness. That exultation in material goods and glories of which we have already spoken, makes his pages rich in colour, and gives them the effect of a sumptuous gala-suit. Certainly the brocade is too brand-new, and has none of the delicate charm that comes to such finery when it is a little faded. Again, nobody can have any excuse for not knowing exactly what it is that Macaulay means. We may assuredly say of his prose what Boileau says of his own poetry—'Et mon vers, bien ou mal, dit toujours quelque chose.' This is a prodigious merit, when we reflect with what fatal alacrity human language lends itself in the hands of so many performers upon the pliant instrument, to all sorts of obscurity, ambiguity, disguise, and pretentious mystification. Scaliger is supposed to have remarked of the Basques and their desperate tongue: ''Tis said the Basques understand one another; for my part, I will never believe it.' The same pungent doubt might apply to loftier members of the hierarchy of speech than that forlorn dialect, but never to English as handled by Macaulay. He never wrote an obscure sentence in his life, and this may seem a small merit, until we remember of how few writers we could say the same.

Macaulay is of those who think prose as susceptible of polished and definite form as verse, and he was, we should suppose, of those also who hold the type and mould of all written language to be spoken language. There are more reasons for demurring to the soundness of the latter doctrine, than can conveniently be made to fill a digression here. For one thing, spoken language necessarily implies one or more listeners, whereas written language may often have to express meditative moods and trains of inward reflection that move through the mind without trace of external reference, and that would lose their special traits by the introduction of any suspicion that they were to be overheard. Again, even granting that all composition must be supposed to be meant, by the fact of its existence, to be addressed to a body of readers, it still remains to be shown that indirect address to the inner ear should follow the same method and rhythm as address directly through impressions on the outer organ. The attitude of the recipient mind is different, and there is the symbolism of a new medium between it and the speaker. The writer, being cut off from all those effects which are producible by the physical intonations of the voice, has to find substitutes for them by other means, by subtler cadences, by a more varied modulation, by firmer notes, by more complex circuits, than suffice for the utmost perfection of spoken language, which has all the potent and manifold aids of personality. In writing, whether it be prose or verse, you are free to produce effects whose peculiarity one can only define vaguely, by saying that the senses have one part less in them than in any other of the forms and effects of art, and the imaginary voice one part more. But the question need not be laboured here, because there can be no dispute as to the quality of Macaulay's prose. Its measures are emphatically the measures of spoken deliverance. Those who have made the experiment, pronounce him to be one of the authors whose works are most admirably fitted for reading aloud. His firmness and directness of statement, his spiritedness, his art of selecting salient and highly coloured detail, and all his other merits as a narrator, keep the listener's attention, and make him the easiest of writers to follow.

Although, however, clearness, directness, and positiveness are master qualities and the indispensable foundations of all good style, yet does the matter plainly by no means end with them. And it is even possible to have these virtues so unhappily proportioned and inauspiciously mixed with other turns and casts of mind, as to end in work with little grace or harmony or fine tracery about it, but only overweening purpose and vehement will. And it is overweeningness and self-confident will that are the chief notes of Macaulay's style. It has no benignity. Energy is doubtless a delightful quality, but then Macaulay's energy is perhaps energy without momentum, and he impresses us more by a strong volubility than by volume. It is the energy of interests and intuitions, which though they are profoundly sincere if ever they were sincere in any man, are yet in the relations which they comprehend, essentially superficial.

Still, trenchancy whether in speaker or writer is a most effective tone for a large public. It gives them confidence in their man, and prevents tediousness—except to those who reflect how delicate is the poise of truth, and what steeps and pits encompass the dealer in unqualified propositions. To such persons, a writer who is trenchant in every sentence of every page, who never lapses for a line into the contingent, who marches through the intricacies of things in a blaze of certainty, is not only a writer to be distrusted, but the owner of a doubtful and displeasing style. It is a great test of style to watch how an author disposes of the qualifications, limitations, and exceptions that clog the wings of his main proposition. The grave and conscientious men of the seventeenth century insisted on packing them all honestly along with the main proposition itself, within the bounds of a single period. Burke arranges them in tolerably close order in the paragraph. Newman, that winning writer, disperses them lightly over his page. Of Macaulay it is hardly unfair to say that he despatches all qualifications into outer space before he begins to write, or if he magnanimously admits one or two here and there, it is only to bring them the more imposingly to the same murderous end.

We have spoken of Macaulay's interests and intuitions wearing a certain air of superficiality; there is a feeling of the same kind about his attempts to be genial. It is not truly festive. There is no abandonment in it. It has no deep root in moral humour, and is merely a literary form, resembling nothing so much as the hard geniality of some clever college tutor of stiff manners, entertaining undergraduates at an official breakfast-party. This is not because his tone is bookish; on the contrary, his tone and level are distinctly those of the man of the world. But one always seems to find that neither a wide range of cultivation, nor familiar access to the best Whig circles, had quite removed the stiffness and self-conscious precision of the Clapham Sect. We would give much for a little more flexibility, and would welcome ever so slight a consciousness of infirmity. As has been said, the only people whom men cannot pardon are the perfect. Macaulay is like the military king who never suffered himself to be seen, even by the attendants in his bed-chamber, until he had had time to put on his uniform and jack-boots. His severity of eye is very wholesome; it makes his writing firm, and firmness is certainly one of the first qualities that good writing must have. But there is such a thing as soft and considerate precision, as well as hard and scolding precision. Those most interesting English critics of the generation slightly anterior to Macaulay,—Házlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Leigh Hunt,—were fully his equals in precision, and yet they knew how to be clear, acute, and definite, without that edginess and inelasticity which is so conspicuous in Macaulay's criticisms, alike in their matter and their form.

To borrow the figure of an old writer, Macaulay's prose is not like a flowing vestment to his thought, but like a suit of armour. It is often splendid and glittering, and the movement of the opening pages of his *History* is superb in its dignity. But that movement is exceptional. As a rule there is the hardness, if there is also often the sheen, of highly-wrought metal. Or, to change our figure, his pages are composed as a handsome edifice is reared, not as a fine statue or a frieze 'with bossy sculptures graven' grows up in the imaginative mind of the statuary. There is no liquid continuity, such as indicates a writer possessed by his subject and not merely possessing it. The periods are marshalled in due order of procession, bright and high-stepping; they never escape under an impulse of emotion into the full current of a brimming stream. What is curious is that though Macaulay seems ever to be brandishing a two-edged gleaming sword, and though he steeps us in an atmosphere of belligerency, yet we are never conscious of inward agitation in him, and perhaps this alone would debar him from a place among the greatest writers. For they, under that reserve, suppression, or management, which is an indispensable condition of the finest rhetorical art, even when aiming at the most passionate effects, still succeed in conveying to their readers a thrilling sense of the strong fires that are glowing underneath. Now when Macaulay advances with his hectoring sentences and his rough pistolling ways, we feel all the time that his pulse is as steady as that of the most practised duellist who ever ate fire. He is too cool to be betrayed into a single phrase of happy improvisation. His pictures glare, but are seldom warm. Those strokes of minute circumstantiality which he loved so dearly, show that even in moments when his imagination might seem to be moving both spontaneously and ardently, it was really only a literary instrument, a fashioning tool and not a melting flame. Let us take a single example. He is describing the trial of Warren Hastings. 'Every step in the proceedings,' he says, 'carried the mind either backward through many troubled centuries to the days when the foundations of our constitution were laid; or far away over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars, worshipping strange gods, and writing strange characters from right to left.'

The odd triviality of the last detail, its unworthiness of the sentiment of the passage, leaves the reader checked; what sets out as a fine stroke of imagination dwindles down to a sort of literary conceit. And this puerile twist, by the way, is all the poorer, when it is considered that the native writing is really from left to right, and only takes the other direction in a foreign, that is to say, a Persian alphabet. And so in other places, even where the writer is most deservedly admired for gorgeous picturesque effect, we feel that it is only the literary picturesque, a kind of infinitely glorified newspaper-reporting. Compare, for instance, the most imaginative piece to be found in any part of Macaulay's writings with that sudden and lovely apostrophe in Carlyle, after describing the bloody horrors following the fall of the Bastille in 1789:—'O evening sun of July, how, at this hour, thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on balls at the Orangerie at Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the Palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers;—and also on this roaring Hell-porch of a Hôtel de Ville!' Who does not feel in this the breath of poetic inspiration, and how different it is from the mere composite of the rhetorician's imagination, assiduously working to order?

This remark is no disparagement of Macaulay's genius, but a classification of it. We are interrogating our own impressions, and asking ourselves among what kind of writers he ought to be placed. Rhetoric is a good and worthy art, and rhetorical authors are often more useful, more instructive, more really respectable than poetical authors. But it is to be said that Macaulay as a rhetorician will hardly be placed in the first rank, by those who have studied both him and the great masters. Once more, no amount of embellishment or emphasis or brilliant figure suffices to produce this intense effect of agitation rigorously restrained; nor can any beauty of decoration be in the least a substitute for that touching and penetrative music which is made in prose by the repressed trouble of grave and high souls. There is a certain music, we do not deny, in Macaulay, but it is the music of a man everlastingly playing for us rapid solos on a silver trumpet, never the swelling diapasons of the organ, and never the deep ecstasies of the four magic strings. That so sensible a man as Macaulay should keep clear of the modern abomination of dithyrambic prose, that rank and sprawling weed of speech, was natural enough; but then the effects which we miss in him, and which, considering how strong the literary faculty in him really was, we are almost astonished to miss, are not produced by dithyramb but by repression. Of course the answer has been already given; Macaulay, powerful and vigorous as he was, had no agitation, no wonder, no tumult of spirit to repress. The world was spread out clear before him; he read it as plainly and as certainly as he read his books; life was all an affair of direct categoricals.

This was at least one secret of those hard modulations and shallow cadences. How poor is the rhythm of Macaulay's prose we only realise by going with his periods fresh in our ear to some true master of harmony. It is not worth while to quote passages from an author who is in everybody's library, and Macaulay is always so much like himself that almost any one page will serve for an illustration exactly as well as any other. Let any one turn to his character of Somers, for whom he had so much admiration, and then turn to Clarendon's character of Falkland;—'a person of such prodigious parts of learning and knowledge, of that inimitable sweetness and delight in conversation, of so flowing and obliging a humanity and goodness to mankind, and of that primitive simplicity and integrity of life, that if there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed civil war than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to all posterity.' Now Clarendon is not a great writer, not even a good writer, for he is prolix and involved, yet we see that even Clarendon, when he comes to a matter in which his heart is engaged, becomes sweet and harmonious in his rhythm. If we turn to a prose-writer of the very first place, we are instantly conscious of a still greater difference. How flashy and shallow Macaulay's periods seem, as we listen to the fine ground-base that rolls in the melody of the following passage of Burke's, and it is taken from one of the least ornate of all his pieces:—

You will not, we trust, believe that, born in a civilised country, formed to gentle manners, trained in a merciful religion, and living in enlightened and polished times, where even foreign hostility is softened from its original sternness, we could have thought of letting loose upon you, our late beloved brethren, these fierce tribes of savages and cannibals, in whom the traces of human nature are effaced by ignorance and barbarity. We rather wished to have joined with you in bringing gradually that unhappy part of mankind into civility, order, piety, and virtuous discipline, than to have confirmed their evil habits and increased their natural ferocity by fleshing them in the slaughter of you, whom our wiser and better ancestors had sent into the wilderness with the express view of introducing, along with our holy religion, its humane and charitable manners. We do not hold that all things are lawful in war. We should think every barbarity, in fire, in wasting, in murders, in tortures, and other cruelties, too horrible and too full of turpitude for Christian mouths to utter or ears to hear, if done at our instigation, by those who we know will make war thus if they make it at all, to be, to all intents and purposes, as if done by ourselves. We clear ourselves to you our brethren, to the present age, and to future generations, to our king and our country, and to Europe, which as a spectator, beholds this tragic scene, of every part or share in adding this last and worst of evils to the inevitable mischiefs of a civil war.

We do not call you rebels and traitors. We do not call for the vengeance of the crown against you. We do not know how to qualify millions of our countrymen, contending with one heart for an admission to privileges which we have ever thought our own happiness and honour, by odious and unworthy names. On the contrary, we highly revere the principles on which you act, though we lament some of their effects. Armed as you are, we embrace you, as our friends and as our brethren by the best and dearest ties of relation.

It may be said that there is a patent injustice in comparing the prose of a historian criticising or describing great events at second hand, with the prose of a statesman taking active part in great events, fired by the passion of a present conflict, and stimulated by the vivid interest of undetermined issues. If this be a well-grounded plea, and it may be so, then of course it excludes a contrast not only with Burke, but also with Bolingbroke, whose fine manners and polished gaiety give us a keen sense of the grievous garishness of Macaulay. If we may not institute a comparison between Macaulay and great actors on the stage of affairs, at least there can be no objection to the introduction of Southey as a standard of comparison. Southey was a man of letters pure and simple, and it is worth remarking that Macaulay himself admitted that he found so great a charm in Southey's style, as nearly always to read it with pleasure, even when Southey was talking nonsense. Now, take any page of the *Life of Nelson* or the *Life of Wesley*; consider how easy, smooth, natural, and winning is the diction and the rise and fall of the sentence, and yet how varied the rhythm and how nervous the phrases; and then turn to a page of Macaulay, and wince under its stamping emphasis, its over-coloured tropes, its exaggerated expressions, its unlovely staccato. Southey's *History of the Peninsular War* is now dead, but if any of my readers has a copy on his highest shelves, I would venture to ask him to take down the third volume, and read the concluding pages, of which Coleridge used to say that they were the finest specimen of historic eulogy he had ever read in English, adding with forgivable hyperbole, that they were more to the Duke's fame and glory than a campaign. 'Foresight and enterprise with our commander went hand in hand; he never advanced but so as to be sure of his retreat; and never retreated but in such an attitude as to impose upon a superior enemy,' and so on through the sum of Wellington's achievements. 'There was something more precious than these, more to be desired than the high and enduring fame which he had secured by his military achievements, the satisfaction of thinking to what end those achievements had been directed; that they were for the deliverance of two most injured and grievously oppressed nations; for the safety, honour, and welfare of his own country; and for the general interests of Europe and of the civilised world. His campaigns were sanctified by the cause; they were sullied by no cruelties, no crimes; the chariot-wheels of his triumphs have been followed by no curses; his laurels are entwined with the amaranths of righteousness, and upon his death-bed he might remember his victories among his good works.'

What is worse than want of depth and fineness of intonation in a period, is all gross excess of colour, because excess of colour is connected with graver faults in the region of the intellectual conscience. Macaulay is a constant sinner in this respect. The wine of truth is in his cup a brandied draught, a hundred degrees above proof, and he too often replenishes the lamp of knowledge with naphtha instead of fine oil. It is not that he has a spontaneous passion for exuberant decoration, which he would have shared with more than one of the greatest names in literature. On the contrary, we feel that the exaggerated words and dashing sentences are the fruit of deliberate travail, and the petulance or the irony of his speech is mostly due to a driving predilection for strong effects. His memory, his directness, his aptitude for forcing things into firm outline, and giving them a sharply defined edge,—these and other singular talents of his all lent themselves to this intrepid and indefatigable pursuit of effect. And the most disagreeable feature is that Macaulay was so often content with an effect of an essentially vulgar kind, offensive to taste, discordant to the fastidious ear, and worst of all, at enmity with the whole spirit of truth. By vulgar we certainly do not mean homely, which marks a wholly different quality. No writer can be more homely than Carlyle, alike in his choice of particulars to dwell upon, and in the terms or images in which he describes or illustrates them, but there is also no writer further removed from vulgarity. Nor do we mean that Macaulay too copiously enriches the tongue with infusion from any Doric dialect. For such raciness he had little taste. What we find in him is that quality which the French call brutal. The description, for instance, in the essay on Hallam, of the licence of the Restoration, seems to us a coarse and vulgar picture, whose painter took the most garish colours he could find on his palette, and then laid them on in untempered crudity. And who is not sensible of the vulgarity and coarseness of the account of Boswell? 'If he had not been a great fool he would not have been a great writer . . . . he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb,' and so forth, in which the shallowness of the analysis of Boswell's character matches the puerile rudeness of the terms. Here again, is a sentence about Montesquieu. 'The English at that time,' Macaulay says of the middle of the eighteenth century, 'considered a Frenchman who talked about constitutional checks and fundamental laws as a prodigy not less astonishing than the learned pig or musical infant.' And he then goes on to describe the author of one of the most important books that ever were written, as 'specious but shallow, studious of effect, indifferent to truth—the lively President,' and so forth, stirring in any reader who happens to know Montesquieu's influence a singular amazement. We are not concerned with the judgment upon Montesquieu, nor with the truth as to contemporary English opinion about him, but a writer who devises an antithesis to such a man as Montesquieu in learned pigs and musical infants, deliberately condescends not merely to triviality or levity, but to flat vulgarity of thought, to something of mean and ignoble association. Though one of the most common, this is not

Macaulay's only sin in the same unfortunate direction. He too frequently resorts to vulgar gaudiness. For example, there is in one place a certain description of an alleged practice of Addison's. Swift had said of Esther Johnson that 'whether from easiness in general, or from her indifference to persons, or from her despair of mending them, or from the same practice which she most liked in Mr. Addison, I cannot determine; but when she saw any of the company very warm in a wrong opinion, she was more inclined to confirm them in it than to oppose them. It prevented noise, she said, and saved time.'[1] Let us behold what a picture Macaulay draws on the strength of this passage. 'If his first attempts to set a presuming dunce right were ill-received,' Macaulay says of Addison, 'he changed his tone, "assented with civil leer," and lured the flattered coxcomb deeper and deeper into absurdity.' To compare this transformation of the simplicity of the original into the grotesque heat and overcharged violence of the copy, is to see the homely maiden of a country village transformed into the painted flaunter of the city.

One more instance. We should be sorry to violate any sentiment of *τὸ σεμνόν* about a man of Macaulay's genius, but what is a decorous term for a description of the doctrine of Lucretius's great poem, thrown in parenthetically, as the 'silliest and meanest system of natural and moral philosophy!' Even disagreeable artifices of composition may be forgiven, when they serve to vivify truth, to quicken or to widen the moral judgment, but Macaulay's hardy and habitual recourse to strenuous superlatives is fundamentally unscientific and untrue. There is no more instructive example in our literature than he, of the saying that the adjective is the enemy of the substantive.

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[1] Forster's *Swift*, i. 265.

In 1837 Jeffrey saw a letter written by Macaulay to a common friend, and stating the reasons for preferring a literary to a political life. Jeffrey thought that his illustrious ally was wrong in the conclusion to which he came. 'As to the tranquillity of an author's life,' he said, 'I have no sort of faith in it. And as to fame, if an author's is now and then more lasting, it is generally longer withheld, and except in a few rare cases it is of a less pervading or elevating description. A great poet or a great *original* writer is above all other glory. But who would give much for such a glory as Gibbon's? Besides, I believe it is in the inward glow and pride of consciously influencing the destinies of mankind, much more than in the sense of personal reputation, that the delight of either poet or statesman chiefly consists.' And Gibbon had at least the advantage of throwing himself into a religious controversy that is destined to endure for centuries. He, moreover, was specifically a historian, while Macaulay has been prized less as a historian proper than as a master of literary art. Now a man of letters, in an age of battle and transition like our own, fades into an ever-deepening distance, unless he has, while he writes, that touching and impressive quality,—the presentiment of the eve ; a feeling of the difficulties and interests that will engage and distract mankind on the morrow.

THE LIFE OF GEORGE ELIOT.[1]

The illustrious woman who is the subject of these volumes makes a remark to her publisher which is at least as relevant now as it was at the time. Can nothing be done, she asks, by dispassionate criticism towards the reform of our national habits in the matter of literary biography? 'Is it anything short of odious that as soon as a man is dead his desk should be raked, and every insignificant memorandum which he never meant for the public be printed for the gossiping amusement of people too idle to re-read his books?' Autobiography, she says, at least saves a man or a woman that the world is curious about, from the publication of a string of mistakes called Memoirs. Even to autobiography, however, she confesses her deep repugnance unless it can be written so as to involve neither self-glorification nor impeachment of others—a condition, by the way, with which hardly any, save Mill's, can be said to comply. 'I like,' she proceeds, that '*He being dead yet speaketh* should have quite another meaning than that.' She shows the same fastidious apprehension still more clearly in another way. 'I have destroyed almost all my friends' letters to me,' she says, 'because they were only intended for my eyes, and could only fall into the hands of persons who knew little of the writers if I allowed them to remain till after my death. In proportion as I love every form of piety—which is venerating love—I hate hard curiosity; and, unhappily, my experience has impressed me with the sense that hard curiosity is the more common temper of mind.' There is probably little difference among us in respect of such experience as that.

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[1] *George Eliot's Life.* By J. W. Cross. Three volumes. Blackwood and Sons. 1885.

Much biography, perhaps we might say most, is hardly above the level of that 'personal talk,' to which Wordsworth sagely preferred long barren silence, the flapping of the flame of his cottage fire, and the under-song of the kettle on the hob. It would not, then, have much surprised us if George Eliot had insisted that her works should remain the only commemoration of her life. There be some who think that those who have enriched the world with great thoughts and fine creations, might best be content to rest unmarked 'where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,' leaving as little work to the literary executor, except of the purely crematory sort, as did Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare, and some others whose names the world will not willingly let die. But this is a stoic's doctrine; the objector may easily retort that if it had been sternly acted on, we should have known very very little about Dr. Johnson, and nothing about Socrates.

This is but an ungracious prelude to some remarks upon a book, which must be pronounced a striking success. There will be very little dispute as to the fact that the editor of these memorials of George Eliot has done his work with excellent taste, judgment, and sense. He found no autobiography nor fragment of one, but he has skilfully shaped a kind of autobiography by a plan which, so far as we know, he is justified in calling new, and which leaves her life to write itself in extracts from her letters and journals. With the least possible obtrusion from the biographer, the original pieces are formed into a connected whole 'that combines a narrative of day-to-day life with the play of light and shade which only letters written in serious moods can give.' The idea is a good one, and Mr. Cross deserves great credit for it. We may hope that its success will encourage imitators. Certainly there are drawbacks. We miss the animation of mixed narrative. There is, too, a touch of monotony in listening for so long to the voice of a single speaker addressing others who are silent behind a screen. But Mr. Cross could not, we think, have devised a better way of dealing with his material : it is simple, modest, and effective.

George Eliot, after all, led the life of a studious recluse, with none of the bustle, variety, motion, and large communication with the outer world, that justified Lockhart and Moore in making a long story of the lives of Scott and Byron. Even here, among men of letters, who were also men of action and of great sociability, are not all biographies too long? Let any sensible reader turn to the shelf where his Lives repose; we shall be surprised if he does not find that nearly every one of them, taking the nineteenth century alone, and including such splendid and attractive subjects as Goethe, Hume, Romilly, Mackintosh, Horner, Chalmers, Arnold, Southey, Cowper, would have been all the better for judicious curtailment. Lockhart, who wrote the longest, wrote also the shortest, the *Life of Burns*; and the shortest is the best, in spite of defects which would only have been worse if the book had been bigger. It is to be feared that, conscientious and honourable as his self-denial has been, even Mr. Cross has not wholly resisted the natural and besetting error of the biographer. Most people will think that the hundred pages of the Italian tour (vol. ii.), and some other not very remarkable impressions of travel, might as well, or better, have been left out.

As a mere letter-writer, George Eliot will not rank among the famous masters of what is usually considered especially a woman's art. She was too busy in serious work to have leisure for that most delightful way of spending time. Besides that, she had by nature none of that fluency, rapidity, abandonment, pleasant volubility, which make letters amusing, captivating, or piquant. What Mr. Cross says of her as the mistress of a *salon*, is true of her for the most part as a correspondent:—'Playing around many disconnected subjects, in talk, neither interested nor amused her much. She took things too seriously, and seldom found the effort of entertaining compensated by the gain.' There is the outpouring of ardent feeling for her friends, sobering down, as life goes on, into a crooning kindliness, affectionate and honest, but often tinged with considerable self-consciousness. It was said of some one that his epigrams did honour to his heart; in the reverse direction we occasionally feel that George Eliot's effusive playfulness does honour to her head. It lacks simplicity and *verve*.

As was inevitable in one whose mind was so habitually turned to the deeper elements of life, she lets fall the pearls of wise speech even in short notes. Here are one or two:—

'My own experience and development deepen every day my conviction that our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathise with individual suffering and individual joy.'

'If there is one attitude more odious to me than any other of the many attitudes of "knowingness," it is that air of lofty superiority to the vulgar. She will soon find out that I am a very commonplace woman.'

'It so often happens that others are measuring us by our past self while we are looking back on that self with a mixture of disgust and sorrow.'

The following is one of the best examples, one of the few examples, of her best manner :—

> I have been made rather unhappy by my husband's impulsive proposal about Christmas. We are dull old persons, and your two sweet young ones ought to find each Christmas a new bright bead to string on their memory, whereas to spend the time with us would be to string on a dark shrivelled berry. They ought to have a group of young creatures to be joyful with. Our own children always spend their Christmas with Gertrude's family; and we have usually taken our sober merry-making with friends out of town. Illness among these will break our custom this year; and thus *mein Mann*, feeling that our Christmas was free, considered how very much he liked being with you, omitting the other side of the question—namely, our total lack of means to make a suitably joyous meeting, a real festival, for Phil and Margaret. I was conscious of this lack in the very moment of the proposal, and the consciousness has been pressing on me more and more painfully ever since. Even my husband's affectionate hopefulness cannot withstand my melancholy demonstration. So pray consider the kill-joy proposition as entirely retracted, and give us something of yourselves only on simple black-letter days, when the Herald Angels have not been raising expectations early in the morning.

This is very pleasant, but such pieces are rare, and the infirmity of human nature has sometimes made us sigh over these pages at the recollection of the cordial cheeriness of Scott's letters, the high spirits of Macaulay, the graceful levity of Voltaire, the rattling dare-devilry of Byron. Epistolary stilts among men of letters went out of fashion with Pope, who, as was said, thought that unless every period finished with a conceit, the letter was not worth the postage. Poor spirits cannot be the explanation of the stiffness in George Eliot's case, for no letters in the English language are so full of playfulness and charm as those of Cowper, and he was habitually sunk in gulfs deeper and darker than George Eliot's own. It was sometimes observed of her, that in her conversation, *elle s'écoutait quand elle parlait*—she seemed to be listening to her own voice while she spoke. It must be allowed that we are not always free from an impression of self-listening, even in the most caressing of the letters before us.

When everything of that kind has been said, we have the profound satisfaction, which is not quite a matter of course in the history of literature, of finding after all that the woman and the writer were one. We close the third volume of the biography, as we have so often closed the third volume of her novels, feeling to the very core that in spite of a style that the French call *alambiqué*, in spite of tiresome double and treble distillations of phraseology, in spite of fatiguing moralities, gravities, and ponderosities, we have still been in communion with a high and commanding intellect and a rich nature. We are vexed by pedantries that recall the *précieuses* of the Hôtel Rambouillet, but we know that she had the soul of the most heroic women in history. We crave more of the Olympian serenity that makes action natural and repose refreshing, but we cannot miss the edification of a life marked by indefatigable labour after generous purposes, by an unsparing struggle for duty, and by steadfast and devout fellowship with lofty thoughts.

Those who know F. W. H. Myers's essay on George Eliot will not have forgotten its most imposing passage :—

> I remember how at Cambridge, I walked with her once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity, on an evening of rainy May ; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men,—the words *God*, *Immortality*, *Duty*,—pronounced with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*. Never, perhaps, had sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing law. I listened, and night fell ; her grave, majestic countenance turned toward me like a Sibyl's in the gloom ; it was as though she withdrew from my grasp, one by one, the two scrolls of promise, and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates.

To many, the relation which was the most important event in George Eliot's life will seem one of those irretrievable errors that reduce all talk of duty to a mockery. Men and women whom in every other respect it would be monstrous to call bad, have taken this particular law into their own hands before now, and committed themselves to conduct of which 'magnanimity owes no account to prudence.' But if they had sense and knew what they were about, they have braced themselves to endure the disapproval of a majority fortunately more prudential than themselves. The world is busy, and its instruments are clumsy. It cannot know all the facts ; it has neither time nor material for unravelling all the complexities of motive, or for distinguishing mere libertinage from grave and deliberate moral misjudgment ; it is protecting itself as much as it is condemning the offenders. On all this, then, we need have neither sophistry nor cant. But those who seek something deeper than a verdict for the honest working purpose of leaving cards and inviting to dinner, may feel that men and women are more fairly judged, if judge them we must, by the way in which they bear the burden of an error than by the decision that laid the burden on their lives. Some idea of this kind was in her own mind when she wrote to her most intimate friend in 1857, 'If I live five years longer, the positive result of my existence on the side of truth and goodness will outweigh the small negative good that would have consisted in my not doing anything to shock others.' This urgent desire to balance the moral account may have had something to do with that laborious sense of responsibility which weighed so heavily on her soul, and had so equivocal an effect upon her art. Whatever else is to be said of this particular union, nobody can deny that the picture on which it left a mark was an exhibition of extraordinary self-denial, energy, and persistency in the cultivation and the use of rare and splendid gifts and powers for what their possessor believed to be the highest objects for society and mankind.

A more perfect companionship, one on a higher intellectual level, or of more sustained mental activity, is nowhere recorded. Lewes's mercurial temperament contributed as much as the powerful mind of his consort to prevent their seclusion from degenerating into an owlish stagnation. To the very last (1878) he retained his extraordinary buoyancy. 'Nothing but death could quench that bright flame. Even on his worst days he had always a good story to tell; and I remember on one occasion in the drawing-room at Witley, between two bouts of pain, he sang through with great *brio*, though without much voice, the greater portion of the tenor part in the *Barber of Seville*, George Eliot playing his accompaniment, and both of them thoroughly enjoying the fun.' All this gaiety, his inexhaustible vivacity, the facility of his transitions from brilliant levity to a keen seriousness, the readiness of his mental response, and the wide range of intellectual accomplishments that were much more than superficial, made him a source of incessant and varied stimulation. Even those who thought that his genial self-content often came near to shockingly bad taste, and that his reminiscences of the green-room and all the rest of the Bohemia in which he had once dwelt, were too racy for his company, still found it hard to resist the alert intelligence with which he rose to every good topic, and the extraordinary heartiness and spontaneity with which the wholesome spring of human laughter was touched in him.

Lewes had plenty of egotism, but it never mastered his intellectual sincerity. George Eliot describes him as one of the few human beings she has known who will, in the heat of an argument, see, and straightway confess, that he is in the wrong, instead of trying to shift his ground or use any other device of vanity. 'The intense happiness of our union,' she wrote to a friend, 'is derived in a high degree from the perfect freedom with which we each follow and declare our own impressions. In this respect I know *no* man so great as he—that difference of opinion rouses no egotistic irritation in him, and that he is ready to admit that another argument is the stronger the moment his intellect recognises it.' This will sound very easy to the dispassionate reader, because it is so obviously just and proper, but if the dispassionate reader ever tries, he may find the virtue not so easy as it looks. Finally, and above all, we can never forget in Lewes's case how much true elevation and stability of character was implied in the unceasing reverence, gratitude, and devotion with which for five-and-twenty years he treated her to whom he owed all his happiness, and who most truly, in his own words, had made his life a new birth.

The reader will be mistaken if he should infer from such passages as abound in her letters that George Eliot had any particular weakness for domestic or any other kind of idolatry. George Sand, in *Lucrezia Floriani*, where she drew so unkind a picture of Chopin, has described her own life and character as marked by 'a great facility for illusions, a blind benevolence of judgment, a tenderness of heart that was inexhaustible; consequently great precipitancy, many mistakes, much weakness, fits of heroic devotion to unworthy objects, enormous force applied to an end that was wretched in truth and fact, but sublime in her thought.' George Eliot had none of this facility. Nor was general benignity in her at all of the poor kind that is incompatible with a great deal of particular censure. Universal benevolence never lulled an active critical faculty, nor did she conceive true humility as at all consisting in hiding from an impostor that you have found him out. Like Cardinal Newman, for whose beautiful passage at the end of the *Apologia* she expresses such richly deserved admiration, she unites to the gift of unction and brotherly love a capacity for giving an extremely shrewd nip to a brother whom she does not love. Her passion for Thomas à Kempis did not prevent her, and there was no reason why it should, from dealing very faithfully with a friend, for instance; from describing Buckle as a conceited, ignorant man; or castigating Brougham and other people in slashing reviews; or otherwise from showing that wonderful expansiveness of the affections went with a remarkably strong, hard, masculine, positive, judging head.

The benefits that George Eliot gained from her exclusive companionship with a man of lively talents were not without some compensating drawbacks. The keen stimulation and incessant strain, unrelieved by variety of daily intercourse, and never diversified by participation in the external activities of the world, tended to bring about a loaded, over-conscious, over-anxious state of mind, which was not only not wholesome in itself, but was inconsistent with the full freshness and strength of artistic work. The presence of the real world in his life has, in all but one or two cases, been one element of the novelist's highest success in the world of imaginative creation. George Eliot had no greater favourite than Scott, and when a series of little books upon English men of letters was planned, she said that she thought that writer among us the happiest to whom it should fall to deal with Scott. But Scott lived full in the life of his fellow-men. Even of Wordsworth, her other favourite, though he was not a creative artist, we may say that he daily saturated himself in those natural elements and effects, which were the material, the suggestion, and the sustaining inspiration of his consoling and fortifying poetry. George Eliot did not live in the midst of her material, but aloof from it and outside of it. Heaven forbid that this should seem to be said by way of censure. Both her health and other considerations made all approach to busy sociability in any of its shapes both unwelcome and impossible. But in considering the relation of her manner of life to her work, her creations, her meditations, one cannot but see that when compared with some writers of her own sex and age, she is constantly bookish, artificial, and mannered. She is this because she fed her art too exclusively, first on the memories of her youth, and next from books, pictures, statues, instead of from the living model, as seen in its actual motion. It is direct calls and personal claims from without that make fiction alive. Jane Austen bore her part in the little world of the parlour that she described. The writer of *Sylvia's Lovers*, whose work George Eliot appreciated with unaffected generosity, was the mother of children, and was surrounded by the wholesome actualities of the family. The authors of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* passed their days in one long succession of wild, stormy, squalid, anxious, and miserable scenes—almost as romantic, as poetic, and as tragic, to use George Eliot's words, as their own stories. George Sand eagerly shared, even to the pitch of passionate tumult and disorder, in the emotions, the aspirations, the ardour, the great conflicts and controversies of her time. In every one of these, their daily closeness to the real life of the world has given a vitality to their work which we hardly expect that even the next generation will find in more than a minority of the romances of George Eliot. It may even come to pass that their position will be to hers as that of Fielding is to Richardson in our own day.

In a letter to Mr. Harrison, which is printed here, George Eliot describes her own method as 'the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit.' The passage recalls a discussion one day at the Priory in 1877.

She was speaking of the different methods of the poetic or creative art, and said that she began with moods, thoughts, passions, and then invented the story for their sake, and fitted it to them; Shakespeare, on the other hand, picked up a story that struck him, and then proceeded to work in the moods, thoughts, passions, as they came to him in the course of meditation on the story. We hardly need the result to convince us that Shakespeare chose the better part.

The influence of her reserved fashion of daily life was heightened by the literary exclusiveness which of set purpose she imposed upon herself. 'The less an author hears about himself,' she says, in one place, 'the better.' 'It is my rule, very strictly observed, not to read the criticisms on my writings. For years I have found this abstinence necessary to preserve me from that discouragement as an artist, which ill-judged praise, no less than ill-judged blame, tends to produce in us.' George Eliot pushed this repugnance to criticism beyond the personal reaction of it upon the artist, and more than disparaged its utility, even in the most competent and highly trained hands. She finds that the diseased spot in the literary culture of our time is touched with the finest point by the saying of La Bruyère, that 'the pleasure of criticism robs us of the pleasure of being keenly moved by very fine things.' 'It seems to me,' she writes, 'much better to read a man's own writings than to read what others say about him, especially when the man is first-rate and the others third-rate. As Goethe said long ago about Spinoza, "I always preferred to learn from the man himself what *he* thought, rather than to hear from some one else what he ought to have thought."' As if the scholar will not always be glad to do both, to study his author and not to refuse the help of the rightly prepared commentator; as if even Goethe himself would not have been all the better acquainted with Spinoza if he could have read Mr. Pollock's book upon him.

On the personal point whether an author should ever hear of himself, George Eliot oddly enough contradicts herself in a casual remark upon Bulwer. 'I have a great respect,' she says, 'for the energetic industry which has made the most of his powers. He has been writing diligently for more than thirty years, constantly improving his position, and profiting by the lessons of public opinion and of other writers.' But if it is true that the less an author hears about himself the better, how are these salutary 'lessons of public opinion' to penetrate to him? 'Rubens,' she says, writing from Munich in 1858, 'gives me more pleasure than any other painter whether right or wrong. More than any one else he makes me feel that painting is a great art, and that he was a great artist. His are such real breathing men and women, moved by passions, not mincing, and grimacing, and posing in mere imitation of passion.' But Rubens did not concentrate his intellect on his own ponderings, nor shut out the wholesome chastenings of praise and blame, lest they should discourage his inspiration.

Beethoven, another of the chief objects of George Eliot's veneration, bore all the rough stress of an active and troublesome calling, though of the musician, if of any, we may say, that his is the art of self-absorption.

Hence, delightful and inspiring as it is to read this story of diligent and discriminating cultivation, of accurate truth and real erudition and beauty, not vaguely but methodically interpreted, one has some of the sensations of the moral and intellectual hot-house. Mental hygiene is apt to lead to mental valetudinarianism. 'The ignorant journalist' may be left to the torment which George Eliot wished that she could inflict on one of those literary slovens whose manuscripts bring even the most philosophic editor to the point of exasperation: 'I should like to stick red-hot skewers through the writer, whose style is as sprawling as his handwriting.' By all means. But much that even the most sympathetic reader finds repellent in George Eliot's later work might perhaps never have been, if Lewes had not practised with more than Russian rigour a censorship of the press and the post-office which kept every disagreeable whisper scrupulously from her ear.

Whatever view we may take of the precise connection between what she read, or abstained from reading, and what she wrote, no studious man or woman can look without admiration and envy on the breadth, variety, seriousness, and energy, with which she set herself her tasks and executed them. She says in one of her letters, 'there is something more piteous almost than soapless poverty in the application of feminine incapacity to literature.' Nobody has ever taken the responsibilities of literature more ardently in earnest. She was accustomed to read aloud to Lewes three hours a day, and her private reading, except when she was engaged in the actual stress of composition, must have filled as many more. His extraordinary alacrity and her brooding intensity of mind prevented these hours from being that leisurely process in slippers and easy-chair which passes with many for the practice of literary cultivation. Much of her reading was for the direct purposes of her own work. The young lady who begins to write historic novels out of her own head will find something much to her advantage if she will refer to the list of books read by George Eliot during the latter half of 1861, when she was meditating *Romola.* Apart from immediate needs and uses, no student of our time has known better the solace, the delight, the guidance that abide in great writings. Nobody who did not share the scholar's enthusiasm could have described the blind scholar in his library in the adorable fifth chapter of *Romola*; and we feel that she must have copied out with keen gusto of her own those words of Petrarch which she puts into old Bardo's mouth—'*Libri medullitus delectant, colloquuntur, consulunt, et viva quadam nobis atque arguta familiaritate junguntur.*'

As for books that are not books, as Milton bade us do in 'neat repasts with wine,' she wisely spared to interpose them oft. Her standards of knowledge were those of the erudite and the savant, and even in the region of beauty she was never content with any but definite impressions. In one place in these volumes, by the way, she makes a remark curiously inconsistent with the usual scientific attitude of her mind. She has been reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*, on which she makes the truly astonishing criticism that it is 'sadly wanting in illustrative facts,' and that 'it is not impressive from want of luminous and orderly presentation.' Then she says that 'the development theory, and all other explanation of processes by which things came to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under processes.' This position it does not now concern us to discuss, but at least it is in singular discrepancy with her strong habitual preference for accurate and quantitative knowledge, over vague and misty moods in the region of the unknowable and the unreachable.

George Eliot's means of access to books were very full. She knew French, German, Italian, and Spanish accurately. Greek and Latin, Mr. Cross tells us, she could read with thorough delight to herself; though after the appalling specimen of Mill's juvenile Latinity that Mr. Bain has disinterred, the fastidious collegian may be sceptical of the scholarship of prodigies. Hebrew was her favourite study to the end of her days. People commonly supposed that she had been inoculated with an artificial taste for science by her companion. We now learn that she took a decided interest in natural science long before she made Lewes's acquaintance, and many of the roundabout pedantries that displeased people in her latest writings, and were set down to his account, appeared in her composition before she had ever exchanged a word with him.

All who knew her well enough were aware that she had what Mr. Cross describes as 'limitless persistency in application.' This is an old account of genius, but nobody illustrates more effectively the infinite capacity for taking pains. In reading, in looking at pictures, in playing difficult music, in talking, she was equally importunate in the search, and equally insistent on mastery. Her faculty of sustained concentration was part of her immense intellectual power. 'Continuous thought did not fatigue her. She could keep her mind on the stretch hour after hour; the body might give way, but the brain remained unwearied.' It is only a trifling illustration of the infection of her indefatigable quality of taking pains, that Lewes should have formed the important habit of rewriting every page of his work, even of short articles for reviews, before letting it go to the press. The journal shows what sore pain and travail composition was to her. She wrote the last volume of *Adam Bede* in six weeks; she 'could not help writing it fast, because it was written under the stress of emotion.' But what a prodigious contrast between her pace and Scott's twelve volumes a year! Like many other people of powerful brains, she united strong and clear general retentiveness with a weak and untrustworthy verbal memory. 'She never could trust herself to write a quotation without verifying it.' 'What courage and patience,' she says of some one else, 'are wanted for every life that aims to produce anything,' and her own existence was one long and painful sermon on that text.

Over few lives have the clouds of mental dejection hung in such heavy unmoving banks. Nearly every chapter is strewn with melancholy words. 'I cannot help thinking more of your illness than of the pleasure in prospect—according to my foolish nature, which is always prone to live in past pain.' The same sentiment is the mournful refrain that runs through all. Her first resounding triumph, the success of *Adam Bede*, instead of buoyancy and exultation, only adds a fresh sense of the weight upon her future life. 'The self-questioning whether my nature will be able to meet the heavy demands upon it, both of personal duty and intellectual production—presses upon me almost continually in a way that prevents me even from tasting the quiet joy I might have in the *work done.* I feel no regret that the fame, as such, brings no pleasure; but it *is* a grief to me that I do not constantly feel strong in thankfulness that my past life has vindicated its uses.'

Romola seems to have been composed in constant gloom. 'I remember my wife telling me, at Witley,' says Mr. Cross, 'how cruelly she had suffered at Dorking from working under a leaden weight at this time. The writing of *Romola* ploughed into her more than any of her other books. She told me she could put her finger on it as marking a well-defined transition in her life. In her own words, "I began it a young woman—I finished it an old woman."' She calls upon herself to make 'greater efforts against indolence and the despondency that comes from too egoistic a dread of failure.' 'This is the last entry I mean to make in my old book in which I wrote for the first time at Geneva in 1849. What moments of despair I passed through after that—despair that life would ever be made precious to me by the consciousness that I lived to some good purpose! It was that sort of despair that sucked away the sap of half the hours which might have been filled by energetic youthful activity; and the same demon tries to get hold of me again whenever an old work is dismissed and a new one is being meditated.' One day the entry is: 'Horrible scepticism about all things paralysing my mind. Shall I ever be good for anything again? Ever do anything again?' On another, she describes herself to a trusted friend as 'a mind morbidly desponding, and a consciousness tending more and more to consist in memories of error and imperfection rather than in a strengthening sense of achievement.' We have to turn to such books as Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* to find a parallel.

Times were not wanting when the sun strove to shine through the gloom, when the resistance to melancholy was not wholly a failure, and when, as she says, she felt that Dante was right in condemning to the Stygian marsh those who had been sad under the blessed sunlight. 'Sad were we in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun, bearing sluggish smoke in our hearts; now lie we sadly here in the black ooze.' But still for the most part sad she remained in the sweet air, and the look of pain that haunted her eyes and brow even in her most genial and animated moments, only told too truly the story of her inner life.

That from this central gloom a shadow should spread to her work was unavoidable. It would be rash to compare George Eliot with Tacitus, with Dante, with Pascal. A novelist—for as a poet, after trying hard to think otherwise, most of us find her magnificent but unreadable—as a novelist bound by the conditions of her art to deal in a thousand trivialities of human character and situation, she has none of their severity of form. But she alone of moderns has their note of sharp-cut melancholy, of sombre rumination, of brief disdain. Living in a time when humanity has been raised, whether formally or informally, into a religion, she draws a painted curtain of pity before the tragic scene. Still the attentive ear catches from time to time the accents of an unrelenting voice, that proves her kindred with those three mighty spirits and stern monitors of men. In George Eliot, a reader with a conscience may be reminded of the saying that when a man opens Tacitus he puts himself in the confessional. She was no vague dreamer over the folly and the weakness of men, and the cruelty and blindness of destiny. Hers is not the dejection of the poet who 'could lie down like a tired child, And weep away this life of care,' as Shelley at Naples; nor is it the despairing misery that moved Cowper in the awful verses of the *Castaway*. It was not such self-pity as wrung from Burns the cry to life, 'Thou art a galling load, Along a rough, a weary road, To wretches such as I;' nor such general sense of the woes of the race as made Keats think of the world as a place 'Where men sit and hear each other groan, Where but to think is to be full of sorrow, And leaden-eyed despairs.' She was as far removed from the plangent reverie of Rousseau as from the savage truculence of Swift. Intellectual training had given her the spirit of order and proportion, of definiteness and measure, and this marks her alike from the great sentimentalists and the sweeping satirists. 'Pity and fairness,' as she beautifully says, 'are two little words which, carried out, would embrace the utmost delicacies of the moral life.' But hers is not seldom the severe fairness of the judge, and the pity that may go with putting on the black cap after a conviction for high treason. In the midst of many an easy flowing page, the reader is surprised by some aside, some judgment of intense and concentrated irony with the flash of a blade in it, some biting sentence where lurks the stern disdain and the anger of Tacitus, and Dante, and Pascal. Souls like these are not born for happiness.

This is not the occasion for an elaborate discussion of George Eliot's place in the mental history of her time, but her biography shows that she travelled along the road that was trodden by not a few in her day. She started from that fervid evangelicalism which made the base of many a powerful character in the nineteenth century, from Cardinal Newman downwards. Then with curious rapidity she threw it all off, and embraced with equal zeal the rather harsh and crude negations which were then associated with the *Westminster Review.* The second stage did not last much longer than the first. 'Religious and moral sympathy with the historical life of man,' she said, 'is the larger half of culture;' and this sympathy, which was the fruit of her culture, had by the time she was thirty become the new seed of a positive faith and a semi-conservative creed. Here is a passage from a letter of 1862 (she had translated Strauss, we may remind ourselves, in 1845, and Feuerbach in 1854):—

> Pray don't ask me ever again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no-faith, to have any negative propagandism in me. In fact, I have very little sympathy with Freethinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere

antagonism to religious doctrines. I care only to know, if possible, the lasting meaning that lies in all religious doctrine from the beginning till now.

Eleven years later the same tendency had deepened :—

All the great religions of the world, historically considered, are rightly the objects of deep reverence and sympathy—they are the record of spiritual struggles, which are the types of our own. This is to me pre-eminently true of Hebrewism and Christianity, on which my own youth was nourished. And in this sense I have no antagonism towards any religious belief, but a strong outflow of sympathy. Every community met to worship the highest Good (which is understood to be expressed by God) carries me along in its main current; and if there were not reasons against my following such an inclination, I should go to church or chapel, constantly, for the sake of the delightful emotions of fellowship which come over me in religious assemblies—the very nature of such assemblies being the recognition of a binding belief or spiritual law, which is to lift us into willing obedience and save us from the slavery of unregulated passion or impulse. And with regard to other people, it seems to me that those who have no definite conviction which constitutes a protesting faith, may often more beneficially cherish the good within them and be better members of society by a conformity based on the recognised good in the public belief, than by a nonconformity which has nothing but negatives to utter. *Not*, of course, if the conformity would be accompanied by a consciousness of hypocrisy. That is a question for the individual conscience to settle. But there is enough to be said on the different points of view from which conformity may be regarded, to hinder a ready judgment against those who continue to conform after ceasing to believe in the ordinary sense. But with the utmost largeness of allowance for the difficulty of deciding in special cases, it must remain true that the highest lot is to have definite beliefs about which you feel that 'necessity is laid upon you' to declare them, as something better which you are bound to try and give to those who have the worse.

These volumes contain many passages in the same sense—as, of course, her books contain them too. She was a constant reader of the Bible, and the *Imitatio* was never far from her hand. 'She particularly enjoyed reading aloud some of the finest chapters of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and St. Paul's Epistles. The Bible and our elder English poets best suited the organ-like tones of her voice, which required for their full effect a certain solemnity and majesty of rhythm.' She once expressed to a younger friend, who shared her opinions, her sense of the loss which they had in being unable to practise the old ordinances of family prayer. 'I hope,' she says, 'we are well out of that phase in which the most philosophic view of the past was held to be a smiling survey of human folly, and when the wisest man was supposed to be one who could sympathise with no age but the age to come.'

For this wise reaction she was no doubt partially indebted, as so many others have been, to the teaching of Comte. Unquestionably the fundamental ideas had come into her mind at a much earlier period, when, for example, she was reading R. W. Mackay's *Progress of the Intellect* (1850). But it was Comte who enabled her to systematise the ideas, and to give them that 'definiteness,' which, as these pages show in a hundred places, was the quality that she sought before all others alike in men and their thoughts. She always remained at a respectful distance from complete adherence to Comte's scheme, but she was never tired of protesting that he was a really great thinker, that his famous survey of the Middle Ages in the fifth volume of the *Positive Philosophy* was full of luminous ideas, and that she had thankfully learned much from it. Wordsworth, again, was dear to her in no small degree on the strength of such passages as that from the *Prelude*, which is the motto of one of the last chapters of her last novel :—

> The human nature with which I felt
> That I belonged and reverenced with love,
> Was not a persistent presence, but a spirit
> Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
> Of evidence from monuments, erect,
> Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
> In earth, *the widely scattered wreck sublime*
> *Of vanished nations.*

Or this again, also from the *Prelude* :—

> There is
> One great society alone on earth :
> The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Underneath this growth and diversity of opinion we see George Eliot's oneness of character, just, for that matter, as we see it in Mill's long and grave march from the uncompromising denials instilled into him by his father, then through Wordsworthian mysticism and Coleridgean conservatism, down to the pale belief and dim starlight faith of his posthumous volume. George Eliot was more austere, more unflinching, and of ruder intellectual constancy than Mill. She never withdrew from the position that she had taken up, of denying and rejecting; she stood to that to the end: what she did was to advance to the far higher perception that denial and rejection are not the aspects best worth attending to or dwelling upon. She had little patience with those who fear that the doctrine of protoplasm must dry up the springs of human effort. Any one who trembles at that catastrophe may profit by a powerful remonstrance of hers in the pages before us.

> The consideration of molecular physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action, any more than it is the direct means of composing a noble picture or of enjoying great music. One might as well hope to dissect one's own body and be merry in doing it, as take molecular physics (in which you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human) to be your dominant guide, your determiner of motives, in what is solely human. That every study has its bearing on every other is true; but pain and relief, love and sorrow, have their peculiar history which make an experience and knowledge over and above the swing of atoms.
>
> With regard to the pains and limitations of one's personal lot, I suppose there is not a single man or woman who has not more or less need of that stoical resignation which is often a hidden heroism, or who, in considering his or her past history, is not aware that it has been cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish action of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation of life. And to my mind there can be no stronger motive than this perception, to an energetic effort that the lives nearest to us shall not suffer in a like manner from *us*.

As to duration and the way in which it affects your view of the human history, what is really the difference to your imagination between infinitude and billions when you have to consider the value of human experience? Will you say that since your life has a term of threescore years and ten, it was really a matter of indifference whether you were a cripple with a wretched skin disease, or an active creature with a mind at large for the enjoyment of knowledge, and with a nature which has attracted others to you?

For herself, she remained in the position described in one of her letters in 1860:—'I have faith in the working out of higher possibilities than the Catholic or any other Church has presented; and those who have strength to wait and endure are bound to accept no formula which their whole souls—their intellect, as well as their emotions—do not embrace with entire reverence. The highest calling and election is *to do without opium*, and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance.' She would never accept the common optimism. 'Life,' she says, 'though a good to men on the whole, is a doubtful good to many, and to some not a good at all. To my thought it is a source of constant mental distortion to make the denial of this a part of religion—to go on pretending things are better than they are.'

Of the afflicting dealings with the world of spirits, which in those days were comparatively limited to some untutored minds of America, but which afterwards came to exert so singular a fascination for some of the most brilliant of George Eliot's younger friends, she thought as any sensible Philistine among us persists in thinking to this day :—

> If it were another spirit aping Charlotte Brontë—if here and there at rare spots and among people of a certain temperament, or even at many spots and among people of all temperaments, tricksy spirits are liable to rise as a sort of earth-bubbles and set furniture in movement, and tell things which we either know already or should be as well without knowing—I must frankly confess that I have but a feeble interest in these doings, feeling my life very short for the supreme and awful revelations of a more orderly and intelligible kind which I shall die with an imperfect knowledge of. If there were miserable spirits whom we could help—then I think we should pause and have patience with their trivial-mindedness; but otherwise I don't feel bound to study them more than I am bound to study the special follies of a peculiar phase of human society. Others, who feel differently, and are attracted towards this study, are making an experiment for us as to whether anything better than bewilderment can come of it. At present it seems to me that to rest any fundamental part of religion on such a basis is a melancholy misguidance of men's minds from the true sources of high and pure emotion.

The period of George Eliot's productions was from 1856, the date of her first stories, down to 1876, when she wrote, not under her brightest star, her last novel of *Daniel Deronda.* During this time the great literary influences of the epoch immediately preceding had not indeed fallen silent, but the most fruitful seed had been sown. Carlyle's *Sartor* (1833-1834), and his *Miscellaneous Essays* (collected, 1839), were in all hands; but he had fallen into his Prussian history (1858–1865), and the last word of his evangel had gone forth to all whom it concerned. *In Memoriam*, whose noble music and deep-browed thought awoke such new and wide response in men's hearts, was published in 1850. The second volume of *Modern Painters*, of which I have heard George Eliot say, as of *In Memoriam* too, that she owed much and very much to it, belongs to an earlier date still (1846), and when it appeared, though George Eliot was born in the same year as its author, she was still translating Strauss at Coventry. Browning, for whose genius she had such admiration, and who was always so good a friend, did indeed produce during this period some work which the adepts find as full of power and beauty as any that ever came from his pen. But Browning's genius has moved rather apart from the general currents of his time, creating character and working out motives from within, undisturbed by transient shadows from the passing questions and answers of the day.

The romantic movement was then upon its fall. The great Oxford movement, which besides its purely ecclesiastical effects, had linked English religion once more to human history, and which was itself one of the unexpected outcomes of the romantic movement, had spent its original force, and no longer interested the stronger minds among the rising generation. The hour had sounded for the scientific movement. In 1859 was published the *Origin of Species*, undoubtedly the most far-reaching agency of the hour, supported as it was by a volume of new knowledge which came pouring in from many sides. The same period saw the important speculations of Spencer, whose influence on George Eliot had from their first acquaintance been of a very decisive kind. Two years after the *Origin of Species* came Maine's *Ancient Law*, and that was followed by the accumulations of Tylor and others, exhibiting order and fixed correlation among sets of facts which had hitherto lain in that cheerful chaos of general knowledge which has been called general ignorance. The excitement was immense. Evolution, development, heredity, adaptation, variety, survival, natural selection, were so many patent pass-keys that were to open every chamber.

George Eliot's novels, as they were the imaginative application of this influx of new ideas, so they fitted in with the moods which those ideas had called up. 'My function,' she said, 'is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge.' Her influence in this direction over serious and impressionable minds was great indeed. The spirit of her art exactly harmonised with the new thoughts that were shaking the world of her contemporaries. Other artists had drawn their pictures with a strong ethical background, but she gave a finer colour and a more spacious air to her ethics by showing the individual passions and emotions of her characters, their adventures and their fortunes, as evolving themselves from long series of antecedent causes, and bound up with many widely operating forces and distant events. Here, too, we find ourselves in the full stream of evolution, heredity, survival, and fixed inexorable law.

This scientific quality of her work may be considered to have stood in the way of her own aim. That the nobler emotions roused by her writings tend to 'make mankind desire the social right' is not to be doubted; but we are not sure that she imparts peculiar energy to the desire. What she kindles is no strenuous, aggressive, and operative desire. The sense of the iron limitations that are set to improvement in present and future by inexorable forces of the past, is stronger in her than any intrepid resolution to press on to whatever improvement may chance to be within reach if we only make the attempt. In energy, in inspiration, in the kindling of living faith in social effort, George Sand, not to speak of Mazzini, takes a far higher place.

Though it was certainly not the business of an artist to form judgments in the sphere of practical politics, George Eliot was far too humane a nature not to be deeply moved by momentous events as they passed. Yet her observations, at any rate after 1848, seldom show that energy of sympathy of which we have been speaking, and these observations illustrate our point. We can hardly think that anything was ever said about the great civil war in America, so curiously far-fetched as the following reflection: 'My best consolation is that an example on so tremendous a scale of the need for the education of mankind through the affections and sentiments, as a basis for true development, will have a strong influence on all thinkers, and be a check to the arid narrow antagonism which in some quarters is held to be the only form of liberal thought.'

In 1848, as we have said, she felt the hopes of the hour in all their fulness. To a friend she writes: 'You and Carlyle (have you seen his article in last week's *Examiner?*) are the only two people who feel just as I would have them—who can glory in what is actually great and beautiful without putting forth any cold reservations and incredulities to save their credit for wisdom. I am all the more delighted with your enthusiasm because I didn't expect it. I feared that you lacked revolutionary ardour. But no—you are just as *sans-culottish* and rash as I would have you. You are not one of those sages whose reason keeps so tight a rein on their emotions that they are too constantly occupied in calculating consequences to rejoice in any great manifestation of the forces that underlie our everyday existence. I thought we had fallen on such evil days that we were to see no really great movement—that ours was what St.-Simon calls a purely critical epoch, not at all an organic one; but I begin to be glad of my date. I would consent, however, to have a year clipt off my life for the sake of witnessing such a scene as that of the men of the barricades bowing to the image of Christ, "who first taught fraternity to men." One trembles to look into every fresh newspaper lest there should be something to mar the picture; but hitherto even the scoffing newspaper critics have been compelled into a tone of genuine respect for the French people and the Provisional Government.'

The hopes of '48 were not very accurately fulfilled, and in George Eliot they never came to life again. Yet in social things we may be sure that undying hope is the secret of vision.

There is a passage in Coleridge's *Friend* which seems to represent the outcome of George Eliot's teaching on most, and not the worst, of her readers:—'The tangle of delusions,' says Coleridge, 'which stifled and distorted the growing tree of our well-being has been torn away; the parasite weeds that fed on its very roots have been plucked up with a salutary violence. To us there remain only quiet duties, the constant care, the gradual improvement, the cautious and unhazardous labours of the industrious though contented gardener—to prune, to strengthen, to engraft, and one by one to remove from its leaves and fresh shoots the slug and the caterpillar.' Coleridge goes farther than George Eliot, when he adds the exhortation—'Far be it from us to undervalue with light and senseless detraction the conscientious hardihood of our predecessors, or even to condemn in them that vehemence to which the blessings it won for us leave us now neither temptation nor pretext.'

George Eliot disliked vehemence more and more as her work advanced. The word 'crudity,' so frequently on her lips, stood for all that was objectionable and distasteful. The conservatism of an artistic moral nature was shocked by the seeming peril to which priceless moral elements of human character were exposed by the energumens of progress. Their impatient hopes for the present appeared to her rather unscientific; their disregard of the past very irreverent and impious. Mill had the same feeling when he disgusted his father by standing up for Wordsworth, on the ground that Wordsworth was helping to keep alive in human nature elements which utilitarians and innovators would need when their present and particular work was done. Mill, being free from the exaltations that make the artist, kept a truer balance. His famous pair of essays on Bentham and Coleridge were published (for the first time, so far as our generation was concerned) in the same year as *Adam Bede*, and I can vividly remember how the 'Coleridge' first awoke in many of us, who were then youths at Oxford, that sense of truth having many mansions, and that desire and power of sympathy with the past, with the positive bases of the social fabric, and with the value of Permanence in States, which form the reputable side of all conservatisms. This sentiment and conviction never took richer or more mature form than in the best work of George Eliot, and her stories lighted up with a fervid glow the truths that minds of another type had just brought to the surface. It was this that made her a great moral force at that epoch, especially for all who were capable by intellectual training of standing at her point of view. We even, as I have said, tried hard to love her poetry, but the effort has ended less in love than in a very distant homage to the majestic in intention, and the sonorous in execution. In fiction, too, as the years go by, we begin to crave more fancy, illusion, enchantment, than the quality of her genius allowed. But the loftiness of her character is abiding, and it passes nobly through the ordeal of an honest biography. 'For the lessons,' says the fine critic already quoted, 'most imperatively needed by the mass of men, the lessons of deliberate kindness, of careful truth, of unwavering endeavour,—for these plain themes one could not ask a more convincing teacher than she whom we are commemorating now. Everything in her aspect and presence was in keeping with the bent of her soul. The deeply-lined face, the too marked and massive features, were united with an air of delicate refinement, which in one way was the more impressive because it seemed to proceed so entirely from within. Nay, the inward beauty would sometimes quite transform the external harshness; there would be moments when the thin hands that entwined themselves in their eagerness, the earnest figure that bowed forward to speak and hear, the deep gaze moving from one face to another with a grave appeal,—all these seemed the transparent symbols that showed the presence of a wise, benignant soul.' And a wise, benignant soul George Eliot will still remain for all right-judging men and women.

ON PATTISON'S MEMOIRS.[1]

To reckon the subject of this volume among leading minds who have stamped a deep influence on our generation, is not possible even to the friendliest partiality. That was not his position, and nobody could be less likely than he would himself have been to claim it. Pattison started no new problem. His name is associated with no fertile speculation, and with no work of the first degree of importance. Nor was he any more intended for a practical leader than for an intellectual discoverer. He did not belong to the class of authoritative men who are born to give decisions from the chair. Measured by any standard commensurate to his remarkable faculties, Pattison's life would be generally regarded as pale, negative, and ineffectual. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that he had a certain singular quality about him that made his society more interesting, more piquant, and more sapid than that of many men of a far wider importance and more commanding achievement.

Critics have spoken of his learning, but the description is only relatively accurate. Of him, in this respect, we may say, what he said of Erasmus. 'Erasmus, though justly styled by Muretus, *eruditus sane vir ac multæ lectionis*, was not a learned man in the special sense of the word—not an *érudit*. He was the man of letters. He did not make a study a part of antiquity for its own sake, but used it as an instrument of culture.' The result of culture in Pattison's actual life was not by any means ideal. For instance, he was head of a college for nearly a quarter of a century, and except as a decorative figure-head with a high literary reputation, he did little more to advance the working interests of his college during these five-and-twenty years than if he had been one of the venerable academic abuses of the worst days before reform. But his temperament, his reading, his recoil from Catholicism, combined with the strong reflective powers bestowed upon him by nature, to produce a personality that was unlike other people, and infinitely more curious and salient than many who had a firmer grasp of the art of right living. In an age of effusion to be reserved, and in days of universal professions of sympathy to show a saturnine front, was to be an original. There was nobody in whose company one felt so much of the ineffable comfort of being quite safe against an attack of platitude. There was nobody on whom one might so surely count in the course of an hour's talk for some stroke of irony or pungent suggestion, or, at the worst, some significant, admonitory, and almost luminous manifestation of the great

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[1] *Memoirs.* By Mark Pattison, late Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. London, 1885.

ars tacendi. In spite of his copious and ordered knowledge, Pattison could hardly be said to have an affluent mind. He did not impart intellectual direction like Mill, nor morally impress himself like George Eliot. Even in pithy humour he was inferior to Bagehot, who was certainly one of the most remarkable of the secondary figures of that generation. But he made every one aware of contact with the reality of a living intelligence. It was evident that he had no designs upon you. He was not thinking of shaking a conviction, nor even of surprising admiration.

Everlasting neutrality, no doubt, may soon become a tiresome affectation. But we can afford to spare a few moments from our solid day to the Sage, if we are so lucky as to hit upon one; always provided that he be not of those whom La Bruyère has described as being made into sages by a certain natural mediocrity of mind. Whatever else may be said of Pattison, at least he was never mediocre, never vapid, trite, or common. Nor was he one of those false pretenders to the judicial mind, who 'mistake for sober sense And wise reserve, the plea of indolence.' On the contrary, his industry and spirit of laborious acquisition were his best credentials. He was invested to our young imaginations with the attraction of the literary explorer, who had voyaged 'through strange seas of thought alone,' had traversed broad continents of knowledge, had ransacked all the wisdom of printed books, and had by native courage and resource saved himself from the engulfing waters of the great Movement.

The Memoirs of such a man may not be one of the monuments of literature. His little volume is not one of those romantic histories of the soul, from the Confessions of Augustine to the Confessions of Jean Jacques, by which men and women have been beguiled, enlightened, or inspired in their pilgrimage. It is not one of those idealised and highly embellished versions of an actual existence, with which such superb artists as George Sand, Quinet, and Renan have delighted people of good literary taste. What the Rector has done is to deliver a tolerably plain and unvarnished tale of the advance of a peculiar type of mind along a path of its own, in days of intellectual storm and stress. It stirs no depths, it gives no powerful stimulus to the desire after either knowledge or virtue—in a word, it does not belong to the literature of edification. But it is an instructive account of a curious character, and contains valuable hints for more than one important chapter in the mental history of the century.

Mark Pattison, born in 1813, passed his youthful days at the rectory of Hauxwell, a village in Wensleydale, on the edge of the great uplands that stretch northwards towards Richmond and Barnard Castle, and form an outwork of the Pennine range and the backbone of northern England. The scene has been described in that biography of his Sister Dora, which he here so unceremoniously despatches as a romance.

'Hauxwell is a tiny village lying on the southern slope of a hill, from whence an extensive view of the moors and Wensleydale is obtained. It contains between two and three hundred inhabitants. The rectory is a pretty little dwelling, some half-mile from the church, which is a fine old building much shut in by trees. The whole village, even on a bright summer day, gives the traveller an impression of intense quiet, if not of dulness; but in winter, when the snow lies thickly for weeks together in the narrow lane, the only thoroughfare of the place; when the distant moors also look cold in their garment of white, and the large expanse of sky is covered with leaden-coloured clouds when the very streams with which the country abounds are frozen into silence—then indeed may Hauxwell be called a lonely village.'

Pattison's father had been educated, badly enough, at Brasenose, but though his own literary instincts were of the slightest, he had social ambition enough to destine his son from the first to go to Oxford and become the fellow of a college. But nothing systematic was done towards making the desired consummation a certainty or even a probability. The youth read enormously, but he did not remember a tenth of what he read, nor did he even take in the sense of half of it as he went along. 'Books as books,' he says, 'were my delight, irrespective of their contents. I was already marked out for the life of a student, yet little that was in the books I read seemed to find its way into my mind.' He found time for much besides reading. He delighted in riding, in shooting rooks in the Hall rookery, and in fishing for trout with clumsy tackle and worm. Passion for country sports was followed by passion for natural history in the ordinary shape of the boy's fancy for collecting insects and observing birds. He fell in with White's *Natural History of Selborne*, read it over and over again, and knew it by heart.

The love of birds, moths, butterflies, led on to the love of landscape; and altogether, in the course of the next six or seven years, grew and merged in a conscious and declared poetical sentiment and a devoted reading of the poets. I don't suppose the temperament was more inclined to aesthetic emotion in me than in other youths; but I was highly nervous and delicate, and having never been at school had not had sentiment and delicacy crushed out of me; also, living on the borderland of oak woods, with green lanes before me, and an expanse of wild heather extending into Northumberland behind, I was favourably placed for imbibing a knowledge by contrast of the physical features of England. My eye was formed to take in at a glance, and to receive delight from contemplating, as a whole, a hill and valley formation. Geology did not come in till ten years later to complete the cycle of thought, and to give that intellectual foundation which is required to make the testimony of the eye, roaming over an undulating surface, fruitful and satisfying. When I came in after years to read *The Prelude* I recognised, as if it were my own history which was being told, the steps by which the love of the country-boy for his hills and moors grew into poetical susceptibility for all imaginative presentations of beauty in every direction.

Perhaps it may be added that this was a preparation for something more than merely poetical susceptibility. By substituting for the definite intellectual impressions of a systematic education, vague sensibilities as the foundation of character, this growth of sentiment, delicacy, and feeling for imaginative presentations of beauty, laid him peculiarly open to the religious influences that were awaiting him in days to come at Oxford.

In 1832 Pattison went up as a freshman to Oriel. His career as an undergraduate was externally distinguished by nothing uncommon, and promised nothing remarkable. He describes himself as shy, awkward, boorish, and mentally shapeless and inert. In 1833, however, he felt what he describes as the first stirrings of intellectual life within him. 'Hitherto I have had no mind, properly so-called, merely a boy's intelligence, receptive of anything I read or heard. I now awoke to the new idea of finding the reason of things; I began to suspect that I might have much to unlearn, as well as to learn, and that I must clear my mind of much current opinion which had lodged there. The principle of rationalism was born in me, and once born it was sure to grow, and to become the master idea of the whole process of self-education on which I was from this time forward embarked.' In other words, if he could have interpreted and classified his own intellectual type, he would have known that it was the Reflective. Reflection is a faculty that ripens slowly; the prelude of its maturity is often a dull and apparently numb-witted youth. Though

Pattison conceived his ideal at the age of twenty, he was five-and-forty before he finally and deliberately embraced it and shaped his life in conformity to it. The principle of rationalism, instead of growing, seemed for twelve whole years to go under, and to be completely mastered by the antagonistic principles of authority, tradition, and transcendental faith.

The secret is to be found in what is the key to Pattison's whole existence, and of what he was more conscious at first than he seems to have been in later days. He was affected from first to last by a profound weakness of will and character. Few men of eminence have ever lived so destitute of nerve as Pattison was—of nerve for the ordinary demands of life, and of nerve for those large enterprises in literature for which by talent and attainment he was so admirably qualified. The stamp of moral *défaillance* was set upon his brow from the beginning. It was something deeper in its roots than the temporary self-consciousness of the adolescent that afflicted him in his early days at Oxford. The shy and stiff undergraduate is a familiar type enough, and Pattison is not the only youth of twenty of whom such an account as his own is true:—

> This inability to apprehend the reason of my social ill success had a discouraging consequence upon the growth of my character. I was so convinced that the fault was in me, and not in the others, that I lost anything like firm footing, and succumbed to or imitated any type, or set, with which I was brought in contact, esteeming it better than my own, of which I was too ashamed to stand

> by it and assert it. Any rough, rude, self-confident fellow, who spoke out what he thought and felt, cowed me, and I yielded to him, and even assented to him, not with that yielding which gives way for peace's sake, secretly thinking itself right, but with a surrender of the convictions to his mode of thinking, as being better than my own, more like men, more like the world.

This fatal trait remained unalterable to the very end, but as time went on things grew worse. Nobody knows what deliberate impotence means who has not chanced to sit upon a committee with Pattison. Whatever the business in hand might be, you might be sure that he started with the firm conviction that you could not possibly arrive at the journey's end. It seemed as if the one great principle of his life was that the Sons of Zeruiah must be too hard for us, and that nobody but a simpleton or a fanatic would expect anything else. 'With a manner,' he says of himself, 'which I believe suggested conceit, I had really a very low estimate of myself as compared with others. I could echo what Bishop Stanley says of himself in his journal: "My greatest obstacle to success in life has been a want of confidence in myself, under a doubt whether I really was possessed of talents on a par with those around me."' Very late in life, talking to Cotter Morison, he said in his pensive way, 'Yes, let us take our worst opinion of ourselves in our most depressed mood. Extract the cube root of that, and you will be getting near the common opinion of your merits.'

He describes another side of the same overspreading infirmity when he is explaining why it was always impossible for him ever to be anything but a Liberal. 'The restlessness of critical faculty,' he says, 'has done me good service when turned upon myself. *I have never enjoyed any self-satisfaction in anything I have ever done*, for I have inevitably made a mental comparison with how it might have been better done. The motto of one of my diaries, "Quicquid hic operis fiat poenitet" may be said to be the motto of my life.' A man who enters the battle on the back of a charger that has been hamstrung in this way, is predestined to defeat. A frequent access of dejection, self-abasement, distrust, often goes with a character that is energetic, persevering, effective, and reasonably happy. To men of strenuous temper it is no paradox to say that a fit of depression is often a form of repose. It was D'Alembert, one of the busiest of the workers of a busy century, who said this, or something to this effect—that low spirits are only a particular name for the mood in which we see our aims and acts for what they really are. Pattison's case was very different. With him, except for a very few short years, despair was a system, and an unreasoned pessimism the most rooted assurance of his being. He tells a thoroughly characteristic story of himself in his days as an undergraduate. He was on the coach between Birmingham and Sheffield. Two men shared the front seat with him, and conversed during the whole of the journey about the things which he was yearning to know and to learn. 'I tried once or twice to put in my oar, but it was a failure: I was too far below their level of knowledge; I relapsed into enchanted listening. I thought to myself, "There exists then such a world, but I am shut out of it, not by the accidents of college, but by my own unfitness to enter."' Mankind suffers much from brassy incompetency and over-complacency, but Pattison is only one of many examples how much more it may lose in a man who has ability, but no fight and no mastery in him. As we have all been told, in this world a man must be either anvil or hammer, and it always seemed as if Pattison deliberately chose to be anvil—not merely in the shape of a renunciation of the delusive pomps and vanities of life, but in the truly questionable sense of doubting both whether he could do anything, and whether he even owed anything to the world in which he found himself.

The earliest launch was a disappointment. He had set his heart upon a first class, but he had not gone to work in the right way. Instead of concentrating his attention on the task in hand, he could only in later days look back with amazement 'at the fatuity of his arrangements and the snail-like progress with which he seemed to be satisfied.' He was content if, on his final review of Thucydides, he got through twenty or thirty chapters a day, and he re-read Sophocles 'at the lazy rate of a hundred and fifty lines a day, instead of going over the difficult places only, which might have been done in a week.'

'There must,' he says, 'have been idleness to boot, but it is difficult to draw the line between idleness and dawdling over work. I dawdled from a mixture of mental infirmity, bad habit, and the necessity of thoroughness if I was to understand, and not merely remember.' The dangerous delights of literary dispersion and dissipation attracted him. Among his books of recreation was Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. 'This I took in slowly, page by page, as if by an instinct; but here was a congenial subject, to which, when free, I would return, and where I would set up my habitation.'

It was probably a reminiscence of these vacations at Hauxwell that inspired the beautiful passage in his *Milton*, where he contrasts the frosty *Ode on the Nativity* with the *Allegro and Penseroso*. 'The two idylls,' he says, 'breathe the free air of spring and summer and of the fields round Horton. They are thoroughly naturalistic; the choicest expression our language has yet found of the fresh charm of country life, not as that life is lived by the peasant, but as it is felt by a young and lettered student, issuing at early dawn or at sunset from his chamber and his books. All such sights and sounds and smells are here blended in that ineffable combination which once or twice, perhaps, in our lives has saluted our young senses before their perceptions were blunted by alcohol, by lust, or ambition, or diluted by the social distractions of great cities' (Pattison's *Milton*, 24).

For the examination school no preparation could have been worse. It was no wonder that so uncalculating an adjustment of means and ends resulted in a second class (1836). The class was not merely a misfortune in itself, but threatened to be a bar to the fulfilment of his lifelong dream of a fellowship. He tried his fortunes at University, where he was beaten by Faber; and at Oriel, his own college, where he was beaten by a famous Dean of St Paul's. 'There was such a moral beauty about Church,' it was said by a man not peculiarly sensitive about moral beauty, 'that they could not help liking him.' Though Pattison had failed, Newman sent him word that there were some who thought that he had done the best. He made two more unsuccessful attempts, the triumphant competitor in one of them being Stanley, the popular Dean of a later day. At last in November 1838, he was elected to a Yorkshire fellowship at Lincoln College. 'No moment in all my life,' he says, 'has ever been so sweet as that Friday morning, when Radford's servant came in to announce my election, and to claim his five shillings for doing so.' Yet if the curtain of fate could have been raised, his election to the Lincoln fellowship might have disclosed itself as the central misfortune of his life.

'All this while,' he says, 'I was rushing into the whirlpool of Tractarianism; was very much noticed by Newman—in fact fanaticism was laying its deadly grip around me.' He had come up from Yorkshire with what he calls his 'home Puritan religion almost narrowed to two points—fear of God's wrath and faith in the doctrine of the Atonement.' He found Newman and his allies actively dissolving this hard creed by means of historical, philosophical, and religious elements which they summed up in the idea of the Church. This idea of the Church, as Pattison truly says, and as men so far removed from sympathy with dogma as J. S. Mill always admitted, 'was a widening of the horizon.' In another place (*Mind*, i. 83-88) he shows the stages of speculation in Oxford during the nineteenth century. From 1800 or 1810 to 1830 the break-up of the old lethargy took the form of a vague intellectualism; free movement, but blind groping out of the mists of insular prejudice in which reaction against the French Revolution had wrapped us. Then came the second period from 1830 to 1845. Tractarianism was primarily a religious movement; it was a revival of the Church spirit which had been dormant since the expiry of Jacobitism at the accession of George III. But it rested on a conception, however imperfect, of universal history; and it even sought a basis for belief in a philosophic exposition of the principle of authority

Pattison, like most of the superior minds then at Oxford, was not only attracted, but thoroughly overmastered by this great tide of thought. He worked at the Lives of the Saints, paid a visit to the cloisters at Littlemore, and was one of Newman's closest disciples, though he thinks it possible that Newman even then, with that curious instinct which so often marks the religious soul, had a scent of his latent rationalism. A female cousin, who eventually went over to Rome, counted for something among the influences that drove him into 'frantic Puseyism.' When the great secession came in 1845 Pattison somehow held back and was saved for a further development. Though he appeared to all intents and purposes as much of a Catholic at heart as Newman or any of them, it was probably his constitutional incapacity for heroic and decisive courses that made him, according to the Oxford legend, miss the omnibus. The first notion of the Church had expanded itself beyond the limits of the Anglican Communion, and been transformed into the wider idea of the Catholic Church. This in time underwent a further expansion.

Now the idea of the Catholic Church is only a mode of conceiving the dealings of divine Providence with the whole race of mankind. Reflection on the history and condition of humanity, taken as a whole, gradually convinced me that this theory of the relation of all living beings to the Supreme Being was too narrow and inadequate. It makes an equal Providence, the Father of all, care only for a mere handful of species, leaving the rest (such is the theory) to the chances of eternal misery. If God interferes at all to procure the happiness of mankind, it must be on a far more comprehensive scale than by providing for them a Church of which far the majority of them will never hear. It was on this line of thought, the details of which I need not pursue, that I passed out of the Catholic phase, but slowly, and in many years, to that highest development when all religions appear in their historical light as efforts of the human spirit to come to an understanding with that Unseen Power whose pressure it feels, but whose motives are a riddle. Thus Catholicism dropped off me as another husk which I had outgrown.

So a marked epoch came to its close, and this was one of the many forms in which the great Anglican impulse expended itself. While Newman and others sank their own individuality in religious devotion to authority and tradition, Pusey turned what had been discussion into controversy, and from a theologian became a powerful ecclesiastical manager. Others dropped their religious interests, and cultivated cynicism and letters. The railway mania, the political outbursts of 1848, utilitarian liberalism, all in turn swept over the Oxford field, and obliterated the old sanctuaries. Pattison went his own way alone. The time came when he looked back upon religion with some of the angry contempt with which George Eliot makes Bardo, the blind old humanist of the fifteenth century, speak of his son, who had left learning and liberal pursuits, 'that he might lash himself and howl at midnight with besotted friars—that he might go wandering on pilgrimages befitting men who knew no past older than the missal and the crucifix.'

It is a critical moment in life when middle age awakens a man from the illusions that have been crowning the earlier years with inward glory. Some are contemptuously willing to let the vision and the dream pass into easy oblivion, while they hasten to make up for lost time in close pursuit of the main chance. Others can forgive anything sooner than their own exploded ideal, and the ghost of their dead enthusiasm haunts them with an embittering presence. Pattison drops a good many expressions about his Anglo-Catholic days that betray something like vindictiveness—which is certainly not philosophical, whatever else it was. But his intellectual faculties were too strong to let him feed on the poison of a reactionary antipathy to a deserted faith. Puseyism, as he says, dropped away from him for lack of nutrition of the religious brain,—which perhaps at the best was more like an artificial limb than a natural organ in a man of Pattison's constitution. For some five years he was inspired by a new and more genuine enthusiasm—for forming and influencing the minds of the young. He found that he was the possessor of what, for lack of a better name, he calls a magnetic power in dealing with the students, and his moral ascendancy enabled him to make Lincoln the best managed college in Oxford.

From 1848 to 1851 he describes his absorption in the work of the college as complete. It excluded all other thoughts. In November that incident occurred which he calls the catastrophe of his life. The headship of the college fell vacant, and for several weeks he was led to believe that this valuable prize was within his grasp. At first the invincible diffidence of his nature made it hard for him to realise that exaltation so splendid was possible. But the prospect, once opened, fastened with a fatally violent hold upon his imagination. The fellows of Lincoln College, who were the electors, were at that time a terribly degraded body. The majority of them were no more capable of caring for literature, knowledge, education, books, or learning than Squire Western or Commodore Trunnion. One of them, says Pattison, had been reduced by thirty years of the Lincoln common-room to a torpor almost childish. Another was 'a wretched *crétin* of the name of Gibbs, who was always glad to come and booze at the college port a week or two when his vote was wanted in support of college abuses.' The description of a third, then surviving, is veiled by editorial charity behind significant asterisks. That Pattison should be popular with such a gang was impossible. Such an Alceste was a standing nuisance and reproach to the rustic Acastes and Clitandres of the Lincoln bursary. They might have tolerated his intellect and overlooked his industry, if his intellect and his industry had not spoiled his sociability. But irony and the *ars tacendi* are not favourite ingredients in the boon companion. Pattison never stayed in the common-room later than eight in the evening, and a man was no better than a skeleton at a feast who left good fellows for the sake of going over an essay with a pupil, instead of taking a hand at whist or helping them through another bottle.

We need not follow the details of the story. Pattison has told them over again, with a minuteness and a sourness that show how the shabby business rankled in his soul to the very last. It was no battle of giants, like the immortal Thirty Years' War between Bentley and the Fellows of Trinity. The election at Lincoln College, which was a scandal in the university for many a long day after, was simply a tissue of paltry machinations, in which weakness, cunning, spite, and a fair spice of downright lying showed that a learned society, even of clergymen, may seethe and boil with the passions of the very refuse of humanity. Intricate and unclean intrigues ended, by a curious turn of the wheel, in the election of a grotesque divine, whom Pattison, with an energy of phrase that recalls the amenities of ecclesiastical controversy in the sixteenth century, roundly designates in so many words as a satyr, a ruffian, and a wild beast. The poor man was certainly illiterate and boorish to a degree that was a standing marvel to all ingenuous youths who came up to Lincoln College between 1850 and 1860. His manners, bearing, and accomplishments were more fitted for the porter of a workhouse than for the head of a college. But he served the turn by keeping out Pattison's rival, and whatever discredit he brought upon the society must be shared by those who, with Pattison at their head, brought him in against a better man. All this unsavoury story might as well have been left where it was.

The reaction was incredibly severe. There has been nothing equal to it since the days of the Psalmist were consumed like smoke, and his heart was withered like grass. 'My mental forces,' says Pattison, 'were paralysed by the shock; a blank, dumb despair filled me; a chronic heartache took possession of me, perceptible even through sleep. As consciousness gradually returned in the morning, it was only to bring with it a livelier sense of the cruelty of the situation into which I had been brought.' He lay in bed until ten o'clock every morning to prolong the semi-oblivion of sleep. Work was impossible. If he read, it was without any object beyond semi-forgetfulness. He was too much benumbed and stupefied to calculate the future. He went through the forms of lecturing, but the life and spirit were gone. Teaching became as odious to him as it had once been delightful. His Satan, as he calls the most active of the enemies who had thus ruined his paradise, planned new operations against him, by trying, on the grounds of some neglected formality, to oust him from his fellowship. 'Here,' cries Pattison, 'was a new abyss opened beneath my feet! My bare livelihood, for I had nothing except my fellowship to live upon, was threatened; it seemed not unlikely that I should be turned into the streets to starve. Visitatorial law, what it might contain! It loomed before me like an Indian jungle, out of which might issue venomous reptiles, man-eating tigers, for my destruction.'

This is not the language of half-humorous exaggeration, but the literal account of a mind as much overthrown from its true balance as is disclosed in the most morbid page of Rousseau's *Confessions*. For months and months after the burden of 'dull, insensible wretchedness,' 'bitter heartache,' weighed upon him with unabated oppression. More than a year after the catastrophe the sombre entries still figure in his diary:—'Very weary and wretched both yesterday and to-day: all the savour of life is departed:'—'Very wretched all yesterday and to-day: dull, gloomy, blank; sleep itself is turned to sorrow.' Nearly two whole years after the same clouds still blacken the sky. 'I have nothing to which I look forward with any satisfaction: no prospects; my life seems to have come to an end, my strength gone, my energies paralysed, and all my hopes dispersed.'

It is true that frustrated ambition was not the only key to this frightfully abject abasement. We may readily believe him when he says that the personal disappointment was a minor ingredient in the total of mental suffering that he was now undergoing. His whole heart and pride had in the last few years been invested in the success of the college; it was the thing on which he had set all his affections; in a fortnight the foundation of his work was broken up; and the wretched and deteriorated condition of the undergraduates became as poison in his daily cup. That may all be true enough. Still, whatever elements of a generous public spirit sharply baffled may have entered into this extraordinary moral breakdown, it must be pronounced a painfully unmanly and unedifying exhibition. It says a great deal for the Rector's honesty and sincerity in these pages, that he should not have shrunk from giving so faithful and prominent an account of a weakness and a self-abandonment which he knew well enough that the world will only excuse in two circumstances. The world forgives almost anything to a man in the crisis of a sore spiritual wrestle for faith and vision and an Everlasting Yea; and almost anything to one prostrated by the shock of an irreparable personal bereavement. But that anybody with character of common healthiness should founder and make shipwreck of his life because two or three low-souled beings had played him a trick after their kind, is as incredible as that a three-decker should go down in a street puddle.

It will not do to say that lack of fortitude is a mark of the man of letters. To measure Pattison's astounding collapse, we have a right to recall Johnson, Scott, Carlyle, and a host of smaller men, whom no vexations, chagrins, and perversities of fate could daunt from fighting the battle out. Pattison was thirty-eight when he missed the headship of his college. Diderot was about the same age when the torments against which he had struggled for the best part of twenty arduous years in his gigantic *Encyclopaedia* seemed to reach the very climax of distraction. 'My dear master,' he wrote to Voltaire, in words which it is a refreshment under the circumstances to recall and to transcribe, 'my dear master, I am over forty. I am tired out with tricks and shufflings. I cry from morning till night for rest, rest; and scarcely a day passes when I am not tempted to go and live in obscurity and die in peace in the depths of my old country. Be useful to men! Is it certain that one does more than amuse them, and that there is much difference between the philosopher and the flute-player? They listen to one and the other with pleasure or with disdain, and they remain just what they were. But there is more spleen than sense in all this, I know—and back I go to the *Encyclopaedia.*' And back he went—that is the great point—with courage unabated and indomitable, labouring with sword in one hand and trowel in the other, until he had set the last stone on his enormous fabric.

Several years went by before Pattison's mind recovered spring and equilibrium, and the unstrung nerves were restored to energy. Fishing, the open air, solitude, scenery, slowly repaired the moral ravages of the college election. The fly rod 'was precisely the resource of which my wounded nature stood in need.' About the middle of April, after long and anxious preparation of rods and tackle, with a box of books and a store of tobacco, he used to set out for the north. He fished the streams of Uredale and Swaledale; thence he pushed on to the Eden and the waters of the Border, to Perthshire, to Loch Maree, Gairloch, Skye, and the far north. When September came, he set off for rambles in Germany. He travelled on foot, delighting in the discovery of nooks and corners that were not mentioned in the guidebooks. Then he would return to his rooms in college, and live among his books. To the undergraduates of that day he was a solemn and mysterious figure. He spoke to no one, saluted no one, and kept his eyes steadily fixed on infinite space. He dined at the high table, but uttered no word. He never played the part of host, nor did he ever seem to be a guest. He read the service in chapel when his turn came; his voice had a creaking and impassive tone, and his pace was too deliberate to please young men with a morning appetite. As he says here, he was a complete stranger in the college. We looked upon him with the awe proper to one who was supposed to combine boundless erudition with an impenetrable misanthropy. In reading the fourth book of the *Ethics*, we regarded the description of the High-souled Man, with his slow movements, his deep tones, his deliberate speech, his irony, his contempt for human things, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of that most singular personage, as the model of the inscrutable sage in the rooms under the clock. Pattison was understood to be the Megalopsuchos in the flesh. It would have been better for him if he could have realised the truth of the healthy maxim that nobody is ever either so happy or so unhappy as he thinks. He would have been wiser if he could have seen the force in the monition of Goethe:—

Willst du dir ein hübsch Leben zimmern,
Must ums Vergangne dich nicht bekümmern,
Und wäre dir auch was verloren,
Musst immer thun wie neu geboren;
Was jeder Tag will, sollst du fragen,
Was jeder Tag will, wird er sagen;
Musst dich an eignem Thun ergetzen,
Was andre thun, das wirst du schätzen;

Besonders keinen Menschen hassen,
Und das Übrige Gott überlassen.
(*Zahme Xenien*, iv.)

Wouldst fashion for thyself a seemly life?—
Then fret not over what is past and gone;
And spite of all thou mayst have lost behind
Yet act as if thy life were just begun:
What each day wills, enough for thee to know,
What each day wills, the day itself will tell;
Do thine own task, and be therewith content,
What others do, that shalt thou fairly judge;
Be sure that thou no brother mortal hate.
And all besides leave to the master Power.

At length 'the years of defeat and despair,' as he calls them, came to an end, though 'the mental and moral deterioration' that belonged to them left heavy traces to the very close of his life. He took a lively interest in the discussions that were stirred by the famous University Commission, and contributed ideas to the subject of academic reform on more sides than one. But such matters he found desultory and unsatisfying; he was in a state of famine; his mind was suffering, not growing; he was becoming brooding, melancholy, taciturn, and finally pessimist. Pattison was five-and-forty before he reached the conception of what became his final ideal, as it had been in a slightly different shape his first and earliest. He had always been a voracious reader. When 'the flood of the Tractarian infatuation' broke over him, he naturally concentrated his studies on the Fathers and on Church History. That phase, in his own term, took eight years out of his life. Then for five years more he was absorbed in teaching and forming the young mind. The catastrophe came, and for five or six years after that he still remained far below 'the pure and unselfish conception of the life of the true student, which dawned upon him afterwards, and which Goethe, it seems, already possessed at thirty.' Up to this time—the year 1857, or a little later—his aims and thoughts had been, in his own violent phrase, polluted and disfigured by literary ambition. He had felt the desire to be before the world as a writer, and had hitherto shared 'the vulgar fallacy that a literary life meant a life devoted to the making of books.' 'It cost me years more of extrication of thought before I rose to *the conception that the highest life is the art to live*, and that both men, women, and books are equally essential ingredients of such a life.'

We may notice in passing, what any one will see for himself, that in contrasting his new conception so triumphantly with the vulgar fallacy from which he had shaken himself free, the Rector went very near to begging the question. When Carlyle, in the strength of his reaction against morbid introspective Byronism, cried aloud to all men in their several vocation, '*Produce, produce; be it but the infinitesimallest product, produce*,' he meant to include production as an element inside the art of living, and an indispensable part and parcel of it. The making of books may or may not belong to the art of living. It depends upon the faculty and gift of the individual. It would have been more philosophical if, instead of ranking the life of study for its own sake above the life of composition and the preparation for composition, Pattison had been content with saying that some men have the impulse towards literary production, while in others the impulse is strongest for acquisition, and that he found out one day that nature had placed him in the latter and rarer class. It is no case of ethical or intellectual superiority, as he fondly supposed, but only diversity of gift.

We must turn to the volume on Casaubon for a fuller interpretation of the oracle. 'The scholar,' says the author, 'is greater than his books. The result of his labours is not so many thousand pages in folio, but himself. . . . Learning is a peculiar compound of memory, imagination, scientific habit, accurate observation, all concentrated, through a prolonged period, on the analysis of the remains of literature. The result of this sustained mental endeavour is not a book, but a man. It cannot be embodied in print, it consists in the living word. True learning does not consist in the possession of a stock of facts—the merit of a dictionary—but in the discerning spirit, a power of appreciation, *judicium* as it was called in the sixteenth century—which is the result of the possession of a stock of facts.'

The great object, then, is to bring the mind into such a condition of training and cultivation that it shall be a perfect mirror of past times, and of the present, so far as the incompleteness of the present will permit, 'in true outline and proportion.' Mommsen, Grote, Droysen fall short of the ideal, because they drugged ancient history with modern politics. The Jesuit learning of the sixteenth century was sham learning, because it was tainted with the interested motives of Church patriotism. To search antiquity with polemical objects in view, is destructive of 'that equilibrium of the reason, the imagination, and the taste, that even temper of philosophical calm, that singleness of purpose,' which were all required for Pattison's ideal scholar. The active man has his uses, he sometimes, but never very cheerfully, admits. Those who at the opening of the seventeenth century fought in literature, in the council-chamber, in the field, against the Church revival of their day, may be counted among worthies and benefactors. 'But for all this, it remains true, that in the intellectual sphere grasp and mastery are incompatible with the exigencies of a struggle.'

The reader will hardly retain gravity of feature before the self-indulgent, self-deceiving sophistication of a canon that actually excludes from grasp and mastery in the intellectual sphere Dante, Milton, and Burke. Pattison repeats in his closing pages his lamentable refrain that the author of *Paradise Lost* should have forsaken poetry for more than twenty years 'for a noisy pamphlet brawl, and the unworthy drudgery of Secretary to the Council Board.' He had said the same thing in twenty places in his book on Milton. He transcribes unmoved the great poet's account of his own state of mind, after the physicians had warned him that if he persisted in using his remaining eye for his pamphlet, he would lose that too. 'The choice lay before me,' says Milton, 'between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight: in such a case I could not listen to the physician, not if Aesculapius himself had spoken from his sanctuary. I could not but obey that inward monitor, I knew not what, that spake to me from heaven. I considered with myself that many had purchased less good with worse ill, as they who give their lives to reap only glory, and I therefore concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render.' And so he wrote the *Second Defence*, and yet lived long enough, and preserved sublimity of imagination enough, to write the *Paradise Lost* as well. Goldwin Smith goes nearer the mark than the Rector when he insists that 'the tension and elevation which Milton's nature had undergone in the mighty struggle, together with the heroic dedication of his faculties to the most serious objects, must have had not a little to do both with the final choice of his subject and with the tone of his poem. "The great Puritan epic" could hardly have been written by any one but a militant Puritan' (*Lectures and Essays*, p. 324). In the last page of his *Memoirs*, Pattison taxes the poet with being carried away by the aims of 'a party whose aims he idealised.' As if the highest fruitfulness of intellect were ever reached without this generous faculty of idealisation, which Pattison, here and always, viewed with such icy coldness. Napoleon used to say that what was most fatal to a general was a knack of combining objects into pictures. A good officer, he said, never makes pictures; he sees objects, as through a field-glass, exactly as they are. In the art of war let us take Napoleon's word for this; but in 'the art to live' a man who dreads to idealise aims or to make pictures, who can think of nothing finer than being what Aristotle calls αὐθέκαστος, or taking everything literally for what it is, will sooner or later find his faculties benumbed and his work narrowed to something for which nobody but himself will care, and for which he will not himself always care with any sincerity or depth of interest.

Let us take another illustration of the false exclusiveness of the definition, in which Pattison erected a peculiar constitutional idiosyncrasy into a complete and final law for the life literary. He used to contend that in many respects the most admirable literary figure of the eighteenth century was the poet Gray. Gray, he would say, never thought that devotion to letters meant the making of books. He gave himself up for the most part to ceaseless observation and acquisition. By travelling, reading, noting, with a patient industry that would not allow itself to be diverted or perturbed, he sought and gained the discerning spirit and the power of appreciation which make not a book but a man. He annotated the volumes that he read with judgment; he kept botanical calendars and thermometrical registers; he had a lively curiosity all round; and, in Gray's own words, he deemed it a sufficient object of his studies to know, wherever he was, what lay within reach that was worth seeing—whether building, ruin, park, garden, prospect, picture, or monument—to whom it had ever belonged, and what had been the characteristic and taste of different ages. 'Turn author,' said Gray, 'and straightway you expose yourself to pit, boxes, and gallery: any coxcomb in the world may come in and hiss if he pleases; ay, and what is almost as bad, clap too, and you cannot hinder him.'

Nobody will be inclined to quarrel with Gray's way of passing his life, and the poet who had produced so exquisite a masterpiece as the *Elegy* had a fair right to spend the rest of his days as he pleased. But the temptations to confound a finicking dilettantism with the 'art to live' are so strong, that it is worth while to correct the Rector's admiration for Gray by looking on another picture — one of Gray's most famous contemporaries, who in variety of interest and breadth of acquired knowledge was certainly not inferior to him, but enormously his superior. Lessing died when he was fifty-two (1729-1781); his life was two years shorter than Gray's (1716-1771), and nearly twenty years shorter than Pattison's (1813-1884). The Rector would have been the last man to deny that the author of *Laocoön* and the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* abounded in the discerning spirit and the power of appreciation. Yet Lessing was one of the most incessantly productive minds of his age. In art, in religion, in literature, in the drama, in the whole field of criticism, he launched ideas of sovereign importance, both for his own and following times, and, in *Nathan the Wise*, the truest and best mind of the eighteenth century found its gravest and noblest voice. Well might George Eliot at the Berlin theatre feel her heart swelling and the tears coming into her eyes as she 'listened to the noble words of dear Lessing, whose great spirit lives immortally in this crowning work of his' (*Life*, i. 364). Yet so far were 'grasp and mastery' from being incompatible with the exigencies of a struggle, that the varied, supple, and splendid powers of Lessing were exercised from first to last in an atmosphere of controversy. Instead of delicately nursing the theoretic life in luxury of the academic cloister, he was forced to work like a slave upon the most uncongenial tasks for a very modest share of daily bread. 'I only wished to have things like other men,' he said in a phrase of pathetic simplicity, at the end of his few short months of wedded happiness; 'I have had but sorry success.' Harassed by small persecutions, beset by paltry debts, passing months in loneliness and in indigence, he was yet so possessed, not indeed by the winged daemon of poetic creation, but by the irrepressible impulse and energy of production, that the power of his intellect triumphed over every obstacle, and made him one of the greatest forces in the wide history of European literature.

Our whole heart goes out to a man who thus, in spite alike of his own impetuous stumbles and the blind buffets of unrelenting fate, yet persevered to the last in laborious, honest, spontaneous, and almost artless fidelity to the use of his talent, and after each repulse only came on the more eagerly to 'live and act and serve the future hours.' It was Lessing and not Rousseau whom Carlyle ought to have taken for his type of the Hero as Man of Letters.

The present writer will not be suspected of the presumption of hinting or implying that Pattison himself was a *dilettante*, or anything like one. There never was a more impertinent blunder than when people professed to identify the shrewdest and most widely competent critic of his day with the Mr. Casaubon of the novel, and his absurd Key to all Mythologies. The Rector's standard of equipment was the highest of our time. 'A critic's education,' he said, 'is not complete till he has in his mind a conception of the successive phases of thought and feeling from the beginning of letters. Though he need not read every book, he must have surveyed literature in its totality. Partial knowledge of literature is no knowledge' (*Fortnightly Review*, Nov. 1877, p. 670). For a man to know his way about in the world of printed books, to find the key to knowledge, to learn the map of literature, 'requires a long apprenticeship. This is a point few men can hope to reach much before the age of forty' (Pattison's *Milton*, 110).

There was no dilettantism here. And one must say much more than that. Many of those in whom the love of knowledge is liveliest omit from their curiosity that part of knowledge which is, to say the least of it, as interesting as all the rest—insight, namely, into the motives, character, conduct, doctrines, fortunes of the individual man. It was not so with Pattison. He was essentially a bookman, but of that high type—the only type that is worthy of a spark of our admiration—which explores through books the voyages of the human reason, the shifting impulses of the human heart, the chequered fortunes of great human conceptions. Pattison knew that he is very poorly equipped for the art of criticism who has not trained himself in the observant analysis of character, and has not realised that the writer who seeks to give richness, body, and flavour to his work must not linger exclusively among texts or abstract ideas or general movements or literary effects, but must tell us something about the moral and intellectual configuration of those with whom he deals. I had transcribed, for an example, his account of Erasmus, but the article is growing long, and the reader may find it for himself in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Fifth Edition).

Though nobody was ever much less of a man of the world in one sense, yet Pattison's mind was always in the world. In company he often looked as if he were thinking of the futility of dinner-party dialectics, where all goes too fast for truth, where people miss one another's points and their own, where nobody convinces or is convinced, and where there is much surface excitement with little real stimulation. That so shrewd a man should have seen so obvious a fact as all this was certain. But he knew that the world is the real thing, that the proper study of mankind is man, and that if books must be counted more instructive and nourishing than affairs, as he thought them to be, it is still only because they are the most complete record of what is permanent, elevated, and eternal in the mind and act of man. Study with him did not mean the compilation of careful abstracts of books, nor did it even mean the historic filiation of thoughts and beliefs. It was the building up before the mind's eye of definite conceptions as to what manner of men had been bred by the diversified agencies of human history, and how given thoughts had shaped the progress of the race. That is what, among other things, led him to spend so much time on the circle of Pope and Addison and Swift.

We have let fall a phrase about the progress of the race, but it hardly had a place in Pattison's own vocabulary. 'While the advances,' he said, 'made by objective science and its industrial applications are palpable and undeniable everywhere around us, it is a matter of doubt and dispute if our social and moral advance towards happiness and virtue has been great or any. The selfishness of mankind might seem to be a constant quantity, neither much abated nor much increased since history began. Italy and France are in most material points not more civilised than they were in the second century of our era. The reign of law and justice has no doubt extended into the reign of hyperborean ice and over Sarmatian plains: but then Spain has relapsed into a double barbarism by engrafting Catholic superstition upon Iberian ferocity. If we look Eastward, we see a horde of barbarians in occupation of the garden of the Old World, not as settlers, but as destroyers' (*Age of Reason*, in *Fortnightly Review*, March 1877, 357-361).

The same prepossessions led him to think that all the true things had been said, and one could do no better than hunt them up again for new uses. Our business was, like Old Mortality, to clear out and cut afresh inscriptions that had been made illegible by time and storm. At least this delivered him from the senseless vanity of originality and personal appropriation. We feel sure that if he found a thought that he had believed to be new, had been expressed in literature before, he would have been pleased and not mortified. No reflection of his own could give him half as much satisfaction as an apt citation from some one else. He once complained of the writer of the article on Comte in the *Encyclopaedia* for speaking with too much deference as to Comte's personality. 'That overweening French vanity and egotism not only overshadows great gifts, but impoverishes the character which nourished such a sentiment. It is not one of the weaknesses which we overlook in great men, and which are to go for nothing.' Of overweening egotism Pattison himself at any rate had none. This was partly due to his theory of history, and partly, too, no doubt, to his inborn discouragement of spirit. He always professed to be greatly relieved when an editor assured him that his work was of the quality that might have been expected from him. 'Having lived to be sixty-three,' he wrote on one of these occasions, 'without finding out why the public embrace or reject what is written for their benefit, I presume I shall now never make the discovery.' And this was perfectly sincere.

The first draft of his *Life of Milton* was found to exceed the utmost limits of what was possible by some thirty or forty pages. Without a single movement of importunity or complaint he cut off the excess, though it amounted to a considerable fraction of what he had done. 'In any case,' he said, 'it is all on Milton; there is no digression on public affairs, and much which might have gone in with advantage to the completeness of the story has been entirely passed over, *e.g.* history of his posthumous fame, Bentley's emendations, *et cetera.*' It almost seemed as if he had a private satisfaction in a literary mishap of this kind: it was an unexpected corroboration of his standing conclusion that this is the most stupid and perverse of all possible worlds.

'My one scheme,' he wrote to a friend in 1877, 'that of a history of the eighteenth century, having been forestalled by Leslie Stephen, and the collections of years having been rendered useless, I am entirely out of gear, and cannot settle to anything.' His correspondent urged the Rector to consider and reconsider. It would be one of the most deplorable misfortunes in literature if he were thus to waste the mature fruit of the study of a lifetime. It was as unreasonable as if Raphael or Titian had refused to paint a Madonna simply because other people had painted Madonnas before them. Some subjects, no doubt, were treated once for all; if Southey had written his history of the Peninsular war after Napier, he would have done a silly thing, and his book would have been damned unread. But what reason was there why we should not have half a dozen books on English thought in the eighteenth century? Would not Grote have inflicted a heavy loss upon us if he had been frightened out of his plan by Thirlwall? And so forth, and so forth. But all such importunities were of no avail. 'I have pondered over your letter,' Pattison replied, 'but without being able to arrive at any resolution of any kind.' Of course one knew that in effect temperament had already cast the resolution for him in letters of iron.

No work on the monumental scale was within his reach. His first great scheme, as he tells us here, was a history of learning from the Renaissance. Then he contracted his views to a history of the French school of Philology, beginning with Budaeus and the Delphin classics. Finally, his ambition was narrowed to fragments. The book on Isaac Casaubon, published in 1875, is a definite and valuable literary product. But the great work would have been the vindication of Scaliger, for which he had been getting materials together for thirty years. Many portions, he says, were already written out in their definite form, and twelve months would have completed it. Alas, a man should not go on trusting until his seventieth year that there is still plenty of daylight. He contributed five biographies to a new edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* The articles on Bentley, Erasmus, Grotius, More, and Macaulay came from his pen. They are all terse, luminous, and finished, and the only complaint that one can make against them is that our instructor parts company from us too soon. It is a stroke of literary humour after Pattison's own heart that Bentley, the mightiest of English scholars, should fill no more space in the *Encyclopaedia* pantheon than Alford, who was hardly even the mightiest of English deans. But the fault was more probably with the Rector's parsimony of words than with the editor. In 1877 he delivered a lecture, afterwards reprinted in one of the reviews, on Books and Critics. It is not without the usual piquancy and the usual cynicism, but he had nothing particular to say, except to tell his audience that a small house is no excuse for absence of books, inasmuch as a set of shelves, thirteen feet by ten, and six inches deep, will accommodate nearly a thousand octavos; and to hint that a man making a thousand a year, who spends less than a pound a week on books, ought to be ashamed of himself. There are some other fugitive pieces scattered in the periodicals of the day. In 1871 and 1872 he published editions of the *Essay on Man* and the *Satires and Epistles* of Pope. Ten years before that he had been at last elected to the headship of his college, but the old enthusiasm for influencing young minds was dead. We have spoken of the Rector's timidity and impotence in practical things. Yet it is fair to remember the persevering courage with which he pleaded one unpopular cause. As Morison said not long ago, his writings on university organisation, the most important of which appeared in 1868, are a noble monument of patient zeal in the cause for which he cared most. 'Pattison never lost heart, never ceased holding up his ideal of what a university should be, viz. a metropolis of learning in which would be collected and grouped into their various faculties the best scholars and *savants* the country could produce, all working with generous emulation to increase the merit and renown of their chairs. If England ever does obtain such a university, it will be in no small measure to Pattison that she will owe it.'

Yet when the record is completed, it falls short of what might have been expected from one with so many natural endowments, such unrivalled opportunities, such undoubted sincerity of interest. Pattison had none of what so much delighted Carlyle in

Ram-Dass, the Hindoo man-god. When asked what he meant to do for the sins of men, Ram-Dass at once made answer that he had fire enough in his belly to burn up all the sins of the world. Of this abdominal flame Pattison had not a spark. Nor had he that awful sense which no humanism could extinguish in Milton, of service as 'ever in the great Taskmaster's eye.' Nor had he, finally, that civil and secular enthusiasm which made men like Bentham and Mill into great workers and benefactors of their kind. Pattison was of the mind of Fra Paolo in a letter to Casaubon. 'As long as there are men there will be fanaticism. The wisest man has warned us not to expect the world ever to improve so much that the better part of mankind will be the majority. No wise man ever undertakes to correct the disorders of the public estate. He who cannot endure the madness of the public, but goeth about to think he can cure it, is himself no less mad than the rest. So, sing to yourself and the muses.' The muses never yet inspired with their highest tunes, whether in prose or verse, men of this degree of unfaith.

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

In 1850 Charlotte Brontë paid a visit to Harriet Martineau at Ambleside, and she wrote to her friends various emphatic accounts of her hostess. ‘Without adopting her theories,’ Miss Brontë said, ‘I yet find a worth and greatness in herself, and a consistency, benevolence, perseverance in her practice, such as wins the sincerest esteem and affection. She is not a person to be judged by her writings alone, but rather by her own deeds and life, than which nothing can be more exemplary or noble.’

The division which Miss Brontë thus makes between opinions and character, and again between literary production and character, is at the root of any just criticism of the two volumes of autobiography which have just (1877) been given to the public. Of the third volume, *The Memorials,* by Mrs. Chapman, it is impossible to say anything serious. Mrs. Chapman fought an admirable fight in the dark times of American history for the abolition of slavery, but unhappily she is without literary gifts; and this third volume is one more illustration of the folly of entrusting the composition of biography to persons who have only the wholly irrelevant claim of intimate friendship, or kinship, or sympathy in public causes. The third volume, then, tells us little about the person to whom they relate. The two volumes of autobiography tell all that we can seek to know, and the reader who judges them in an equitable spirit will be ready to allow that, when all is said that can be said of her hardness, arbitrariness, and insularity, Harriet Martineau is still a singular and worthy figure among the conspicuous personages of her generation. Some will wonder how it was that her literary performances acquired so little of permanent value. Others will be pained by the distinct repudiation of all theology, avowed by her with a simple and courageous directness that can scarcely be counted other than honourable to her. But everybody will admit, as Charlotte Brontë did, that though her books are not of the first nor of the second rank, yet behind books and opinions was a remarkable personality, a sure eye for social realities, a moral courage that never flinched; a strong judgment within its limits; a vigorous self-reliance both in opinion and act, which yet did not prevent a habit of the most neutral self-judgment; the commonplace virtues of industry and energy devoted to aims too elevated, and too large and generous, to be commonplace; a splendid sincerity, a magnificent love of truth.

Harriet Martineau was born at Norwich in 1802, and she died in the course of the summer of 1876. Few people have lived so long as three-quarters of a century, and undergone so little substantial change of character, amid some very important changes of opinion. Her family was Unitarian, and family life was in her case marked by some of that stiffness, that severity, that rigour, with which Unitarians are sometimes taxed by religionists of a more ecstatic doctrine. Her childhood was unhappy; the household seems to have been unamiable, and she was treated with none of the tenderness and sympathy for which firm and defiant natures are apt to yearn as strongly as others that get the credit of greater sensibility. With that singular impulse to suicide which is frequent among children, though rarer with girls than boys, she went one day into the kitchen for the carving-knife, that she might cut her throat; luckily the servants were at dinner, and the child retreated. Deafness, which proved incurable, began to afflict her before she was sixteen. A severe, harsh, and mournful kind of religiosity seized her, and this 'abominable spiritual rigidity,' as she calls it, confirmed all the gloomy predispositions of her mind. She learned a good deal, mastering Latin, French, and Italian; and reading much in her own tongue, including constant attention to the Bible, with all sorts of commentaries and explanations, such as those of us who were brought up in a certain spiritual atmosphere have good reasons never to forget. This expansion of intellectual interest, however, did not make her less silent, less low in her spirits, less full of vague and anxious presentiment. The reader is glad when these ungracious years of youth are at an end, and the demands of active life have stirred Harriet Martineau's energies into vigorous work.

In 1822 her father died, and seven years later his widow and his daughters lost at a single blow nearly all that they had in the world. Before this event, which really proved to be a blessing in the disguise of a catastrophe, Harriet Martineau had written a number of slight pieces. They had been printed, and received a certain amount of recognition. They were of a religious cast, as was natural in one with whom religious literature, and religious life and observance, had hitherto taken in the whole sphere of her continual experience. *Traditions of Palestine* and *Devotional Exercises* are titles that tell their own tale, and we may be sure that their authoress was still at the antipodean point of the positive philosophy in which she ended her speculative journey. She still clung undoubtingly to what she had been brought up to believe when she won three prizes for essays intended to present Unitarianism to the notice of Jews, of Catholics, and of Mahometans. Her success in these and similar efforts turned her mind more decidedly towards literature as a profession.

Miss Martineau is at some pains to assure us on several occasions that it was the need of utterance now and always that drove her to write, and that money, although welcome when it came, was never her motive. This perhaps a little savours of affectation. Nobody would dream of suspecting Miss

Martineau of writing anything that she did not believe to be true or useful merely for the sake of money. But there is plenty of evidence that the prospect of payment stirred her to true and useful work, as it does many other authors by profession, and as it does the followers of all professions whatever. She puts the case fairly enough in another place :—'Every author is in a manner an adventurer; and no one was ever more decidedly so than myself; but the difference between one kind of adventurer and another is, I believe, simply this—that the one has something to say which presses for utterance, and is uttered at length without a view to future fortunes; while the other has a sort of general inclination towards literature, without any specific need of utterance, and a very definite desire for the honours and rewards of the literary career.' Even in the latter case, however, honest journeyman's work enough is done in literature by men and women who seek nothing higher than a reputable source of income. Miss Martineau did, no doubt, seek objects far higher and more generous than income, but she lived on the income which literature brought to her; and there seems a certain failure of her usually admirable common sense in making any ado about so simple a matter. When doctors and counsel refuse their guineas, and the parson declines a stipend, it will be quite soon enough for the author to be especially anxious to show that he has a right to regard money much as the rest of the human race regard it.

Miss Martineau underwent the harsh ordeal that awaits most literary aspirants. She had a scheme in her head for a long series of short tales to illustrate some of the propositions of political economy. She trudged about London day after day, through mud and fog, with weary limbs and anxious heart, as many an author has done before and since. The times were bad; cholera was abroad; people were full of apprehension and concern about the Reform Bill; and the publishers looked coldly on a doubtful venture. Miss Martineau talks none of the conventional nonsense about the cruelty and stupidity of publishers. What she says is this: 'I have always been anxious to extend to young or struggling authors the sort of aid which would have been so precious to me in that winter of 1829–1830, and I know that, in above twenty years, I have never succeeded but once.' One of the most distinguished editors in London, who had charge of a periodical for many years, told us what comes to the same thing, namely, that in no single case during all these years did a volunteer contributor of real quality, or with any promise of eminence, present himself or herself. So many hundreds think themselves called, so few are chosen. In Miss Martineau's case, however, the trade made a mistake. When at length she found some one to go halves with her in the enterprise, on terms extremely disadvantageous to herself, the first of her tales was published (1832), and instantly had a prodigious success. The sale ran up to more than ten thousand of each monthly volume. In that singular autobiographical sketch of herself which Miss Martineau prepared for a London paper, to be printed as her obituary notice, she pronounced a judgment upon this work which more disinterested, though not more impartial, critics will confirm. Her own unalterable view, she says, of what the work could and could not effect, 'prevented her from expecting too much from it, either in regard to its social operations or its influence on her own fame. The original idea of exhibiting the great natural laws of society by a series of pictures of selected social action was a fortunate one; and her tales initiated a multitude of minds into the conception of what political economy is, and how it concerns everybody living in society. Beyond this there is no merit of a high order in the work. It popularised in a fresh form some doctrines and many truths long before made public by others.' James Mill, one of the acutest economists of the day, and one of the most vigorous and original characters of that or any other day, had foretold failure; but when the time came, he very handsomely admitted that his prophecy had been rash. In after years, when Miss Martineau had acquired from Comte a conception of the growth and movement of societies as a whole, with their economic conditions controlled and constantly modified by a multitude of other conditions of various kinds, she rated the science of her earlier days very low. Even in those days, however, she says: 'I believe I should not have been greatly surprised or displeased to have perceived, even then, that the pretended science is no science at all, strictly speaking; and that so many of its parts must undergo essential change, that it may be a question whether future generations will owe much more to it than the benefit (inestimable, to be sure) of establishing the grand truth that social affairs proceed according to general laws, no less than natural phenomena of every kind.'

Harriet Martineau was not of the class of writers, most of them terribly unprofitable, who merely say literary things about social organisation, its institutions, and their improvement. Her feeling about society was less literary than scientific: it was not sentimental, but the business-like quality of a good administrator. She was moved less by pity or by any sense of the pathos and the hardness of the world, than by a sensible and energetic interest in good government and in the rational and convenient ordering of things. Her tales to illustrate the truths of political economy are what might be expected from a writer of this character. They are far from being wanting—many of them—in the genuine interest of good story-telling. They are rapid, definite, and without a trace of either slovenliness or fatigue. We are amazed as we think of the speed and prompt regularity with which they were produced; and the fertile ingenuity with which the pill of political economy is wrapped up in the confectionery of a tale, may stand as a marvel of cleverness and inventive dexterity. Of course, of imagination or invention in a high sense there is not a trace. Such a quality was not in the gifts of the writer, nor could it in any case have worked within such limitations as those set by the matter and the object of the series.

Literary success was followed in the usual order by social temptation. Miss Martineau removed from Norwich to London, and she had good reasons for making the change. Her work dealt with matters of a political kind, and she could only secure a real knowledge of what was best worth saying by intercourse with those who had a better point of view for a survey of the social state of England than could be found in a provincial town like Norwich. So far as evening parties went, Miss Martineau soon perceived how little 'essential difference there is between the extreme case of a cathedral city and that of literary London, or any other place, where dissipation takes the turn of book-talk instead of dancing or masquerading.' She went out to dinner every night except Sundays, and saw all the most interesting people of the London of her day. While she was free from presumption in her judgments, she was just as free from a foolish willingness to take the reputations of her hour on trust. Her attitude was friendly and sensible, but it was at the same time critical and independent; and that is what every frank, upright, and sterling character naturally becomes in face of an unfamiliar society. Harriet

Martineau was too keen-sighted, too aware of the folly and incompetent pretension of half the world, too consciously self-respecting and proud, to take society and its ways with any diffidence or ingenuous simplicity. On the importance of the small *littérateur* who unreasonably thinks himself a great one, on the airs and graces of the gushing blue-stockings who were in vogue in that day, on the detestable vulgarity of literary lionising, she had no mercy. She recounts with caustic relish the story about a certain pedantical lady, of whom Tierney had said that there was not another head in England that could encounter hers on the subject of Cause and Effect. The story was that when in a country house one fine day she took her seat in a window, saying in a business-like manner (to David Ricardo): 'Come now, let us have a little discussion about Space.' We remember a story about a certain Mademoiselle de Launay, afterwards well known to the Paris of the eighteenth century, being introduced at Versailles by a silly great lady who had an infatuation for her. 'This,' the great lady kept saying, 'is the young person whom I have told you about, who is so wonderfully intelligent, who knows so much. Come, Mademoiselle, pray talk. Now, Madame, you will see how she talks. Well, first of all, now talk a little about religion; then you can tell us about something else.'

We cannot wonder that Miss Martineau did not go a second time to the house where Space might be the unprovoked theme of a casual chat. Pretension in every shape she hated most heartily. Her judgments in most cases were thoroughly just—at this period of her life at any rate—and sometimes even unexpectedly kindly; and the reason is that she looked at society through the medium of a strong and penetrating kind of common sense, which is more often the gift of clever women than of clever men. If she is masculine, she is, like Mrs. Colonel Poyntz, in one of Bulwer's novels, 'masculine in a womanly way.' There is a real spirit of ethical divination in some of her criticism of character. Take the distinguished man whose name we have just written. 'He seems to be a woman of genius inclosed by misadventure in a man's form,' she says. 'He has insight, experience, sympathy, letters, power and grace of expression, and an irrepressible impulse to utterance, and industry which should have produced works of the noblest quality; and these have been intercepted by mischiefs which may be called misfortune rather than fault. His friendly temper, his generous heart, his excellent conversation (at his best), and his simple manners (when he forgot himself), have many a time "left me mourning" that such a being should allow himself to sport with perdition.' Those who knew most about Bulwer, and who were most repelled by his faults, will feel in this page of Miss Martineau's the breath of social equity in which charity is not allowed to blur judgment, nor moral disapproval to narrow, starve, and discolour vision into lost possibilities of character. And we may note in passing how even here, in the mere story of the men and women whom she met in London drawing-rooms, Harriet Martineau does not lose herself in gossip about individuals looked at merely in their individual relations. It is not merely the 'blighting of promise nor the forfeiture of a career' that she deplores in the case of a Bulwer or a Brougham; it is 'the intercepting of national blessings.' If this view of natural gifts as a source of blessing to society, and not merely of power or fame to their privileged possessor, were more common than it is, the impression which such a thought is calculated to make would be the highest available protection against those blighted promises and forfeited careers, of which Brougham and Bulwer were only two out of a vast host of examples.

It is the very fulness with which she is possessed by this large way of conceiving a life in its manifold relations to the service of the world, that is the secret of Harriet Martineau's firm, clear, calm, and almost neutral way of judging both her own work and character and those of others. By calm we do not mean that she was incapable of strong and direct censure. Many of her judgments, both here and in her *Biographic Sketches*, are stern; and some may even pass for harsh. But they are never the product of mere anger or heatedness, and it is a great blunder to suppose that reasoned severity is incompatible with perfect composure, or that calm is another name for amiable vapidity.

Thöricht ist's
In allen Stücken billig sein; es heisst
Sein eigen Selbst zerstören.

Folly it is
In all things to be lenient; it means
Destroying thine own self.

Her condemnation of the Whigs, for example, is as stringent and outspoken as condemnation can be; yet it is a deliberate and reasoned judgment, not mere bitterness or prejudice. The Whigs were at that moment, between 1832 and 1834, at the height of their authority, political, literary, and social. After a generation of misgovernment they had been borne to power on the tide of national enthusiasm for parliamentary reform, and for all those improvements in our national life to which parliamentary reform was no more than the first step. The harshness and darkness of the past generation were the measure of the hopes of the new time. These hopes, which were at least as strong in Harriet Martineau as in anybody then living, the Whigs were soon felt to have cheated. She cannot forgive them. Speaking of John and Edward Romilly, 'they had virtuous projects,' she says, 'and had every hope of achieving service worthy of their father's fame; but their aspirations were speedily tamed down—as all high aspirations *are* lowered by Whig influences.' A certain peer is described as 'agreeable enough in society to those who are not very particular in regard to sincerity; and was, as Chancellor of the Exchequer or anything else, as good a representative as could be found of the flippancy, conceit, and official helplessness and ignorance of the Whig administration.' Charles Knight started a new periodical for the people under the patronage of the official Whigs. 'But the poverty and perverseness of their ideas, and the insolence of their feelings, were precisely what might be expected by all who really knew that remarkably vulgar class of men. They purposed to lecture the working classes, who were by far the wiser party of the two, in a jejune, coaxing, dull, religious-tract sort of tone, and criticised and deprecated everything like vigour, and a manly and genial tone of address in the new publication, while trying to push in as contributors effete and exhausted writers and friends of their own, who knew about as much of the working classes of England as of those of Turkey.' This energetic description, which belongs to the year 1848, gives us an interesting measure of the distance that has been traversed since then. The workmen have acquired direct political power; they have organised themselves into effective groups for industrial purposes; they have produced leaders of ability and sound judgment; and the Whig who seeks their support must stoop or rise to talk a Radicalism that would have amply satisfied even Harriet Martineau herself.

The source of this improvement in the society to which she bade farewell, over that into which she had been born, is set down by Miss Martineau to the most remarkable literary genius with whom, during her residence in London, she was brought into contact. 'What Wordsworth did for poetry,' she says, 'in bringing us out of a conventional idea and method to a true and simple one, Carlyle has done for morality. He may be himself the most curious opposition to himself—he may be the greatest mannerist of his age while denouncing conventionalism—the greatest talker while eulogising silence—the most woful complainer while glorifying fortitude—the most uncertain and stormy in mood, while holding forth serenity as the greatest good within the reach of man; but he has nevertheless infused into the mind of the English nation a sincerity, earnestness, healthfulness, and courage which can be appreciated only by those who are old enough to tell what was our morbid state when Byron was the representative of our temper, the Clapham church of our religion, and the rotten-borough system of our political morality.' We have no quarrel with this account of the greatest man of letters of his generation. But Carlyle has only been one influence among others. It is a far cry indeed from *Sartor Resartus* to the *Tracts for the Times*, yet they were both of them protests against the same thing, both of them attempted answers to the same problem, and the *Tracts* perhaps did more than *Sartor* to quicken spiritual life, to shatter 'the Clapham church,' and to substitute a mystic faith and not unlovely hope for the frigid, hard, and mechanical lines of official orthodoxy on the one hand, and the egotism and sentimental despair of Byronism on the other. There is a third school, too, and Harriet Martineau herself was no insignificant member of it, to which both the temper and the political morality of our time have owed a deep debt; the school of those utilitarian political thinkers who gave light rather than heat, and yet by the intellectual force with which they insisted on the right direction of social reform, also stirred the very impulse which made men desire social reform. The most illustrious of this body was undoubtedly John Mill; because to accurate political science he added a fervid and vibrating social sympathy, and a power of quickening it in the best minds of a scientific turn. It is odd, by the way, that Miss Martineau, while so lavish in deserved panegyric on Carlyle, should be so grudging and disparaging in the case of Mill, with whom her intellectual affinities must have been closer than with any other of her contemporaries. The translator of Comte's *Positive Philosophy* had better reasons than most people for thinking well of the services of the author of the *System of Logic*: it was certainly the latter book which did more than any other to prepare the minds of the English philosophic public for the former.

It is creditable to Miss Martineau's breadth of sympathy that she should have left on record the tribute of her admiration for Carlyle, for nobody has written so harshly as Carlyle on the subject which interested Harriet Martineau more passionately than any other events of her time. In 1834 she had finished her series of illustrations of political economy; her domestic life was fretted by the unreasonable exigences of her mother; London society had perhaps begun to weary her, and she felt the need of a change of scene. The United States, with the old European institutions placed amid new conditions, were then as now a natural object of interest to everybody with a keen feeling for social improvement. So to the Western Republic Miss Martineau turned her face. She had not been long in the States before she began to feel that the Abolitionists, at that moment a despised and persecuted handful of men and women, were the truly moral and regenerating party in the country. Harriet Martineau no sooner felt this conviction driving out her former prejudice against them as fanatical and impracticable, than she at once bore public testimony, at serious risk of every kind to herself, in favour of the extreme Anti-Slavery agitators. And for thirty years she never slackened her sympathy nor her energetic action on English public opinion, in this most vital matter of her time. She was guided not merely by humanitarian disgust at the cruel and brutal abominations of slavery,—though we know no reason why this alone should not be a sufficient ground for turning Abolitionist,—but also on the more purely political ground of the cowardice, silence, corruption, and hypocrisy that were engendered in the Free States by purchased connivance at the peculiar institution of the Slave States. Nobody has yet traced out the full effect upon the national character of the Americans of all those years of conscious complicity in slavery, after the moral iniquity of slavery had become clear to the inner conscience of the very men who ignobly sanctioned the mobbing of Abolitionists.

In the summer of 1836 Miss Martineau returned to England, having added this great question to the stock of her foremost objects of interest and concern. Such additions, whether literary or social, are the best kind of refreshment that travel supplies. She published two books on America: one of them abstract and quasi-scientific, *Society in America*; the other, *A Retrospect of Western Travel*, of a lighter and more purely descriptive quality. Their success with the public was moderate, and in after years she condemned them in very plain language, the first of them especially as 'full of affectations and preachments.' Their only service, and it was not inconsiderable, was the information which they circulated as to the condition of slavery and of the country under it. We do not suppose that they are worth reading at the present day, except from a historical point of view. But they are really good specimens of a kind of literature which is not abundant, and yet which is of the utmost value—we mean the record of the sociological observation of a country by a competent traveller, who stays long enough in the country, has access to the right persons of all kinds, and will take pains enough to mature his judgments. It was a happy idea of O'Connell's to suggest that she should go over to Ireland, and write such an account of that country as she had written of the United States. And we wish at this very hour that some one as competent as Miss Martineau would do what O'Connell wished her to do. A similar request came to her from Milan: why should she not visit Lombardy, and then tell Europe the true tale of Austrian rule?

But after her American journey Miss Martineau felt a very easily intelligible desire to change the literary field. For many years she had been writing almost entirely about fact: and the constraint of the effort to be always correct, and to bear without solicitude the questioning of her correctness, had become burdensome. She felt the danger of losing nerve and becoming morbidly fearful of criticism on the one hand, and of growing narrow and mechanical about accuracy on the other. 'I longed inexpressibly,' she says, 'for the liberty of fiction, while occasionally doubting whether I had the power to use that freedom as I could have done ten years before.' The product of this new mental phase was *Deerbrook*, which was published in the spring of 1839. *Deerbrook* is a story of an English country village, its petty feuds, its gentilities, its chances and changes of fortune. The influence of Jane Austen's stories is seen in every chapter; but Harriet Martineau had none of the easy flow, the pleasant humour, the light-handed irony of her model, any more than she had the energetic and sustained imaginative power of Charlotte or Emily Brontë. There is playfulness enough in *Deerbrook*, but it is too deliberate to remind us of the crooning involuntary playfulness of *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*. *Deerbrook* is not in the least a story with a moral; it is truly and purely a piece of art; yet we are conscious of the serious spirit of the social reformer as haunting the background, and only surrendering the scene for reasons of its own. On the other hand, there is in *Deerbrook* a gravity of moral reflection that Jane Austen, whether wisely or unwisely, seldom or never attempts. In this respect *Deerbrook* is the distant forerunner of some of George Eliot's most characteristic work. Distant, because George Eliot's moralising is constantly suffused by the broad light of a highly poetic imagination, and this was in no degree among Miss Martineau's gifts. Still there is something above the flat touch of the common didactic in such a page as that in which (chapter xix.) she describes the case of 'the unamiable—the only order of evil ones who suffer hell without seeing and knowing that it is hell: nay, they are under a heavier curse than even this, they inflict torments second only to their own, with an unconsciousness worthy of spirits of light.' However, when all is said, we may agree that this is one of the books that give a rational person pleasure once, but which we hardly look forward to reading again.

Shortly after the publication of her first novel, Miss Martineau was seized by a serious internal malady, from which recovery seemed hopeless.

According to her usual practice of taking her life deliberately in her hands, and settling its conditions for herself, instead of letting things drift as they might, she insisted on declining the hospitable shelter pressed upon her by a near relative, on the excellent ground that it is wrong for an invalid to impose restraints upon a healthy household. She proceeded to establish herself in lodgings at Tynemouth, on the coast of Northumberland. Here she lay on a couch for nearly five years, seeing as few persons as might be, and working at such literary matters as came into her head with steadfast industry and fortitude. The ordeal was hard, but the little book that came of it, *Life in a Sickroom*, remains to show the moods in which the ordeal was borne.

At length Miss Martineau was induced to try mesmerism as a possible cure for her disease, and what is certain is, that after trying mesmeric treatment, the invalid whom the doctors had declared incurable shortly recovered as perfect health as she had ever known. A virulent controversy arose upon the case, for, by some curious law, physicians are apt to import into professional disputes a heat and bitterness at least as marked as that of their old enemies, the theologians. It was said that Miss Martineau had begun to improve before she was mesmerised, and what was still more to the point, that she had been taking heavy doses of iodine. 'It is beyond all question or dispute,' as Voltaire said, 'that magic words and ceremonies are quite capable of most effectually destroying a whole flock of sheep, if the words be accompanied by a sufficient quantity of arsenic.' Into this controversy we need not enter.

The only point to which we are called upon to refer is that the mesmerist way of thinking about man and the rest of nature led to repudiation by Miss Martineau of the whole structure of dogmatic theology. For one thing, she ceased to hold the conception of a Deity with any human attributes whatever; also of any principle or practice of Design; 'of an administration of life according to human wishes, or of the affairs of the world by the principles of human morals.' All these became to her as mere visions; beliefs necessary in their day, but not philosophically nor permanently true. Miss Martineau was not an Atheist in the philosophic sense; she never denied a First Cause, but only that this Cause is within the sphere of human attributes, or can be defined in their terms.

Then, for another thing, she ceased to believe in the probability of there being a continuance of conscious individual life after the dissolution of the body. With this, of course, fell all expectation of a state of personal rewards and punishments. 'The real and justifiable and honourable subject of interest,' she said, 'to human beings, living and dying, is the welfare of their fellows surrounding them or surviving them.' About that she cared supremely, and about nothing else did she bring herself to care at all.

Although it was Mr. Atkinson who finally provided her with a positive substitute for her older beliefs, yet a journey which Miss Martineau made in the East shortly after her restoration to health (1846) had done much to build up in her mind a historic conception of the origin and order of the great faiths of mankind—the Christian, the Hebrew, the Mahometan, the old Egyptian. We need not say more on this subject. The work in which she published the experiences of the journey which was always so memorable to her, deserves a word. There are few more delightful books of travel than *Eastern Life, Past and Present.* The descriptions are admirably graphic, and they have the attraction of making their effect by a few direct strokes, without any of the wordy elaboration of our modern picturesque. The writer shows a true feeling for nature, and she shows a vigorous sense, which is not merely pretty sentiment, like Chateaubriand's, for the vast historic associations of those old lands and dim cradles of the race. All is sterling and real; we are aware that the elevated reflection and the meditative stroke are not due to mere composition, but did actually pass through her mind as the suggestive wonders passed before her eyes. And hence there is no jar as we find a little homily on the advantage of being able to iron your own linen on a Nile boat, followed by a lofty page on the mighty pair of solemn figures that gaze as from eternity on time amid the sand at Thebes. The whole, one may say again, is sterling and real, both the elevation and the homeliness. The student of the history of opinion may find some interest in comparing Miss Martineau's work with the famous book, *Ruins; or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires*, in which Volney, between fifty and sixty years before, had drawn equally dissolvent conclusions with her own from the same panorama of the dead ages. Perhaps Miss Martineau's history is not much better than Volney's, but her brisk sense is preferable to Volney's high *a priori* declamation and artificial rhetoric.

Before starting for the East, Miss Martineau had settled a new plan of life for herself, and built a little house where she thought she could best carry out her plan. To this little house she returned, and it became her cherished home for the long remainder of her days. London, during the years of her first success, had not been without its usual attractions to the new-comer, but she had always been alive to the essential incompleteness, the dispersion, the want of steadfast self-collection, in a life much passed in London society. And we may believe that the five austere and lonely years at Tynemouth, with their evening outlook over the busy waters of the harbour-bar into the stern far-off sea, may have slowly bred in her an unwillingness to plunge again into the bustling triviality, the gossip, the distracting lightness of the world of splendid fireflies. To have discerned the Pale Horse so near and for so long a space awakens new moods, and strangely alters the old perspectives of our life. Yet it would imply a misunderstanding of Harriet Martineau's character to suppose that she turned her back upon London, and built her pretty hermitage at Ambleside, in anything like the temper of Jean Jacques Rousseau. She was far too positive a spirit for that, and far too full of vivid and concentrated interest in men and their doings. It would be unjust to think of Harriet Martineau as having no ear for the inner voices, yet her whole nature was objective; it turned to practice and not to reverie. She had her imaginative visions, as we know, and as all truly superior minds have them, even though their main superiority happens to be in the practical order. But her visions were limited as a landscape set in a rigid frame; they had not the wings that soar and poise in the vague unbounded empyrean. And she was much too sensible to think that these moods were strong, or constant, or absorbing enough in her case to furnish material and companionship for a life from day to day and year to year. Nor again was it for the sake of undisturbed acquisition of knowledge, nor cultivation of her finer faculties that she sought a hermitage. She was not moved by thought of the famous maxim which Goethe puts into the mouth of Leonore—

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.
>
> A talent comes to strength in quietude;
> Character, 'mid the currents of the world.

Though an intense egotist, in the good and respectable sense of insisting on her own way of doing things, of settling for herself what it was that she was living for, and of treading the path with a firm and selfreliant step, yet Harriet Martineau was as little of an egotist as ever lived, in the poor and stifling sense of thinking of the perfecting of her own culture as in the least degree worthy of ranking among Ends-in-themselves. She settled in the Lake District, because she thought that there she would be most favourably placed for satisfying the various conditions that she had fixed as necessary to her scheme of life. 'My own idea of an innocent and happy life,' she says, 'was a house of my own among poor improvable neighbours, with young servants whom I might train and attach to myself, with pure air, a garden, leisure, solitude at command, and freedom to work in peace and quietness.'

Her manner of life during these years is pleasant to contemplate; cheerful, active, thoroughly wholesome. 'My habit,' she says, 'was to rise at six and to take a walk, returning to my solitary breakfast at half-past seven. My household orders were given for the day, and all affairs settled out of doors and in by a quarter or half-past eight, when I went to work, which I continued without interruption, except from the post, till three o'clock or later, when alone. While my friend was with me we dined at two, and that was of course the limit of my day's work.' De Tocqueville, if we remember, never saw his guests until after he had finished his morning's work, of which he had done six hours by eleven o'clock. Schopenhauer was still more sensitive to the jar of external interruption on that finely-tuned instrument, the brain, after a night's repose, for it was as much as his housekeeper's place was worth to allow either herself or any one else to appear to the philosopher before mid-day. After the early dinner at Ambleside cottage came little bits of neighbourly business, exercise, and so forth. 'It is with singular alacrity that in winter evenings I light the lamp and unroll my wool-work, and meditate or dream till the arrival of the newspaper tells me that the tea has stood long enough. After tea, if there was news from the seat of war, I called in my maids, who brought down the great atlas and studied the chances of the campaign with me. Then there was an hour or two for Montaigne, or Bacon, or Shakespeare, or Tennyson, or some dear old biography.'

The only productions of this time worth mentioning are the *History of the Thirty Years' Peace* (1849) and the condensed version of Comte's *Positive Philosophy* (1853), both of them meritorious and useful pieces of work, and both of them undertaken, as nearly all Miss Martineau's work was, not from merely literary motives, but because she thought that they would be meritorious and useful, and because nothing more useful came into her head or under her hand at the moment. The condensation of Comte is easy and rapid, and it is said by those who have looked very closely into it to be hardly free from some too hasty renderings. It must, however, on the whole, be pronounced a singularly intelligent and able performance. The pace at which Comte was able to compose is a standing marvel to all who have pondered the great and difficult art of composition. It must be admitted that the author of the English version of him was in this respect no unworthy match for her original. Miss Martineau tells us that she despatched the last three volumes, numbering over 1800 pages, in some five months. She thought the rendering of thirty pages of Comte a fair morning's work. If we consider the abstract and difficult nature of the matter, this must be pronounced something of a feat. We have not space to describe her method, but any reader who happens to be interested in the mechanism of literary productions will find the passage in vol. ii. p. 391. The *History of the Thirty Years' Peace* is no less astonishing an example of rapid industry. From the first opening of the books to study for the history to the depositing of the MS. of the first volume at press was exactly six months. The second volume took six months, with an interval of some weeks of holiday and other work! We think all this worth mentioning, because it is an illustration of what is a highly important maxim, namely, that it is a great mistake to expend more time and labour on a piece of composition than is enough to make it serve the purpose in hand. If Miss Martineau had given twice as many years as she gave months to the condensation of Comte, the book would not have been a whit more useful in any possible respect—indeed, over-elaboration might easily have made it much less so—and the world would have lost many other excellent, if not dazzling or stupendous services.

'Her original power,' she wrote of herself in that manly and outspoken obituary notice to which we have already referred, 'was nothing more than was due to earnestness and intellectual clearness within a certain range. With small imaginative and suggestive powers, and therefore nothing approaching to genius, she could see clearly what she did see, and give a clear expression to what she had to say. In short, she could popularise, while she could neither discover nor invent. . . . She could obtain and keep a firm grasp of her own views, and moreover she could make them understood. The function of her life was to do this, and in as far as it was done diligently and honestly, her life was of use.' All this is precisely true, and her life was of great use; and that makes what she says not only true, but an example worth much weighing by many of those who meddle with literature.

Miss Martineau was never tired of trying to be useful in directing and improving opinion. She did not disdain the poor neighbours at her gates. She got them to establish a Building Society, she set them an example of thrifty and profitable management by her little farm of two acres, and she gave them interesting and cheerful courses of lectures in the winter evenings. All this time her eye was vigilant for the great affairs of the world. In 1852 she began to write leading articles for the *Daily News*, and in this department her industry and her aptitude were such that at times she wrote as many as six leading articles in a week. When she died, it was computed that she had written sixteen hundred. They are now all dead enough, as they were meant to die, but they made an impression that is still alive in its consequences upon some of the most important social, political, and economical matters of five-and-twenty important years. In what was by far the greatest of all the issues of those years, the Civil War in the United States, Harriet Martineau's influence was of the most inestimable value in keeping public opinion right against the strong tide of perverted Southern sympathies in this country.

To this period belong the *Biographic Sketches* which she contributed to a London newspaper. They have since been collected in a single volume, now in its fourth edition. They are masterpieces in the style of the vignette. Their conciseness, their clearness in fact, their definiteness in judgment, and above all, the rightly graduated impression of the writer's own personality in the background, make them perfect in their kind. There is no fretting away of the portrait in over-multiplicity of lines and strokes. Here more than anywhere else Miss Martineau shows the true quality of the writer, the true mark of literature, the sense of proportion, the modulated sentence, the compact and suggestive phrase. There is a happy precision, a pithy brevity, a condensed argumentativeness. And this literary skill is made more telling by the writer's own evident interest and sincerity about the real lives and characters of the various conspicuous people with whom she deals. It may be said that she has no subtle insight into the complexities of human nature, and that her philosophy of character is too little analytical, too downright, too content with averages of motive, and too external. This is so in a general way, but it does not spoil the charm of these sketches, because the personages concerned, though all of them conspicuous, were for the most part commonplace in motive, though more than commonplace in strength of faculty. Subtle analysis is wholly unreasonable in the case of Miss Martineau herself, and she would probably have been unable to use that difficult instrument in criticising characters less downright and objective than her own.

The moment of the Crimean War marked an alarming event in her own life. The doctors warned her that she had a heart disease which would end her days suddenly and soon. Miss Martineau at once set her affairs in order, and sat down to write her *Autobiography*. She had the manuscript put into type, and the sheets finally printed off, just as we now possess them. But the hour was not yet. The doctors had exaggerated the peril, and the strong woman lived for twenty years after she had been given up. She used up the stuff of her life to the very end, and left no dreary remnant nor morbid waste of days. She was like herself to the last—English, practical, positive. Yet she had thoughts and visions which were more than this. We like to think of this faithful woman and veteran worker in good causes, in the stroll she always took on her terrace before retiring to rest for the night :—

'On my terrace there were two worlds extended bright before me, even when the midnight darkness hid from my bodily eyes all but the outlines of the solemn mountains that surround our valley on three sides, and the clear opening to the lake on the south. In the one of those worlds I saw now the magnificent coast of Massachusetts in autumn, or the flowery swamps of Louisiana, or the forests of Georgia in spring, or the Illinois prairie in summer; or the blue Nile, or the brown Sinai, or the gorgeous Petra, or the view of Damascus from the Salahiey; or the Grand Canal under a Venetian sunset, or the Black Forest in twilight, or Malta in the glare of noon, or the broad desert stretching away under the stars, or the Red Sea tossing its superb shells on shore in the pale dawn. That is one world, all comprehended within my terrace wall, and coming up into the light at my call. The other and finer scenery is of that world, only beginning to be explored, of Science. . . . It is truly an exquisite pleasure to dream, after the toil of study, on the sublime abstractions of mathematics; the transcendent scenery unrolled by astronomy; the mysterious, invisible forces dimly hinted to us by physics; the new conception of the constitution of matter originated by chemistry; and then, the inestimable glimpses opened to us, in regard to the nature and destiny of man, by the researches into vegetable and animal organisation, which are at length perceived to be the right path of inquiry into the highest subjects of thought. . . . Wondrous beyond the comprehension of any one mind is the mass of glorious facts and the series of mighty conceptions laid open; but the shadow of the surrounding darkness rests upon it all. The unknown always engrosses the greater part of the field of vision, and the awe of infinity sanctifies both the study and the dream.'

It would be a pity if difference of opinion upon subjects of profound difficulty, remoteness, and manifold perplexity, were to prevent any one from recognising in such words and such moods as these what was, in spite of some infirmities, a character of large thoughts and generous purpose. And with this feeling we may part from her.

ON 'THE RING AND THE BOOK.'

When the first volume of Browning's new poem came before the critical tribunals, public and private, recognised or irresponsible, much lamentation arose even in quarters where a manlier humour might have been expected, over the poet's choice of a subject. With facile largeness of censure, it was pronounced a murky subject, sordid, unlovely, morally sterile, an ugly leaf out of some ancient Italian Newgate Calendar. One hinted in vain that wisdom is justified of her children, that the poet must be trusted to judge of the capacity of his own theme, and that it is his conception and treatment of it that ultimately justify his choice or discredit. Now that the entire work is before the world, that is plain, and it is admitted. When the second volume, containing *Giuseppe Caponsacchi*, appeared, men no longer found it sordid or ugly; the third, with *Pompilia*, convinced them that the subject was not, after all, incurably unlovely; and the fourth, with *The Pope*, and the passage from the Friar's sermon, may well persuade those who needed persuasion, that moral fruitfulness depends on the master, his eye and hand, his vision and grasp, more than on this and that in the transaction which has taken possession of his imagination.

The truth is, we have for long been so debilitated by pastorals, by graceful presentation of the Arthurian legend for drawing-rooms, by idylls, not robust and Theocritean, by verse directly didactic, that a rude blast of air from the outside welter of human realities is apt to give a shock that might well show in what sort of paradise we have been living. Our public is inclined to measure the right and possible in art by the superficial probabilities of life and manners within a ten-mile radius of Hyde Park Corner. Is it likely, asks the critic, that Duke Silva would have done this, that Fedalma would have done that? Who shall suppose it possible that Caponsacchi acted thus, that Count Guido was possessed by devils so? The poser is triumphant, because the critic is tacitly appealing to the normal standard of probabilities in our own day. In the tragedy of Pompilia we are taken far from the serene and homely region in which some of our teachers would fain have it that the whole moral universe can be pent up. We see the black passions of man at their blackest; hate, so fierce, undiluted, implacable, passionate, as to be hard of conception by our simpler northern natures; cruelty, so vindictive, subtle, persistent, deadly, as to fill us with a pain almost too great for true art to produce; greediness, lust, craft, penetrating a whole stock and breed, even down to the ancient mother of 'that fell house of hate,'—

The gaunt grey nightmare in the furthest smoke,
The hag that gave these three abortions birth,
Unmotherly mother and unwomanly
Woman, that near turns motherhood to shame,
Womanliness to loathing: no one word,
No gesture to curb cruelty a whit
More than the she-pard thwarts her playsome whelps
Trying their milk-teeth on the soft o' the throat
O' the first fawn, flung, with those beseeching eyes,
Flat in the covert! How should she but couch,
Lick the dry lips, unsheathe the blunted claw,
Catch 'twixt her placid eyewinks at what chance
Old bloody half-forgotten dream may flit,
Born when herself was novice to the taste,
The while she lets youth take its pleasure.

But, then, if the poet has lighted up for us these grim depths, he has not failed to raise us too into the presence of proportionate loftiness and purity.

Tantum vertice in auras
Aetherias quantum radice in Tartara tendit.

Like the gloomy and umbrageous grove of which the Sibyl spake to the pious Aeneas, the poem conceals a golden branch and golden leaves. In the second volume, Guido, servile and false, is followed by Caponsacchi, as noble alike in conception and execution as anything that Browning has ever achieved. In the third volume, the austere pathos of Pompilia's tale relieves the too oppressive jollity of Don Giacinto, and the flowery rhetoric of Bottini; while in the fourth, the deep wisdom, justice, and righteous mind of the Pope reconcile us to endure the sulphurous whiff from the pit in the confession of Guido, now desperate, naked, and satanic. From what at first was sheer murk, there comes out a long procession of human figures, infinitely various in form and thought, in character and act; a group of men and women, eager, passionate, indifferent; tender and ravenous, mean and noble, humorous and profound, jovial with prosperity or half-dumb with misery, skirting the central tragedy, or plunged deep into the thick of it, passers-by who put themselves off with a glance at the surface of a thing, and another or two who dive to the heart of it. And they all come out with a certain Shakespearean fulness, vivid, direct. Above all, they are every one of them men and women, with free play of human life in limb and feature, as in an antique sculpture. So much of modern art, in poetry as in painting, runs to mere drapery. 'I grant,' said Lessing, 'that there is also a beauty in drapery, but can it be compared with that of the human form? And shall he who can attain to the greater, rest content with the less? I much fear that the most perfect master in drapery shows by that very talent wherein his weakness lies.' This was spoken of plastic art, but it has a yet deeper meaning in poetic criticism. There too, the master is he who presents the natural shape, the curves, the thews of men, and does not labour and seek praise for faithful reproduction of the mere moral drapery of the hour, this or another; who gives you Hercules at strife with Antaeus, Laocoön writhing in the coils of the divine serpents, the wrestle with circumstance or passion, with outward destiny or inner character, in the free outlines of nature and reality. The capacity which it possesses for this presentation, at once so varied and so direct, is one reason why the dramatic form ranks as the highest expression and measure of the creative power of the poet; and the extraordinary grasp with which Browning has availed himself of this double capacity is one reason why we should reckon *The Ring and the Book* as a masterpiece.

We may say this, and still not be blind to faults. Many persons agree that they find it too long, and if they find it so, then for them it is too long. Others, who cannot resist the critic's temptation of believing that a remark must be true if it only look acute and specific, vow that the disclosure in the first volume of the whole plan and plot vitiates subsequent artistic merit. If one cannot enjoy what comes, for knowing beforehand what is coming, this objection may be allowed to have a root in human nature; but then two things might perhaps be urged on the other side, —first, that the interest of the poem lies in the development and presentation of character, on the one hand, and in the many sides which a single transaction offered to as many minds, on the other; and therefore that this true interest could not be marred by the bare statement what the transaction was or, baldly looked at, seemed to be; and, second, that the poem was meant to find its reader in a mood of mental repose, ready to receive the poet's impressions, undisturbed by any agitating curiosity as to plot or final outcome. A more valid accusation touches the many verbal perversities, in which a poet has less right than another to indulge. The compound Latin and English of Don Giacinto, notwithstanding the fun of the piece, still grows a burden to the flesh. Then there are harsh and formless lines, bursts of metrical chaos, from which a writer's dignity and self-respect might be expected to preserve him. There are passages, again, marked by a coarse violence of expression little short of barbarous. The only thing to be said is, that the countrymen of Shakespeare have had to learn to forgive an uncouth outrage on form and beauty to fine creative genius. If only one could be sure that readers, unschooled as too many are to love the simple and elevated beauty of such form as Sophocles or as Corneille gives, would not think the worst fault the chief virtue, and confound the poet's bluntnesses with his admirable originality. It is certain that in Shakespeare's case his defects are constantly fastened upon, by critics who have never seriously studied the forms of dramatic art except in the literature of England, and extolled as instances of his characteristic might. It may well be, therefore, that the caprices which Browning permits to himself may find admirers, or, what is worse, even imitators. It would be most unjust, however, while making due mention of these things, to pass over the dignity and splendour of the verse in places, where the intensity of the writer's mood finds worthy embodiment in a sustained gravity, vigour, and finish not to be surpassed. The concluding lines of the *Caponsacchi*, the appeal of the Greek poet in *The Pope*, one or two passages in the first *Guido*, and the close of the *Pompilia*, ought to be referred to when one seeks to know what power over the instrument of his art Browning might have achieved, if he had chosen to discipline himself in instrumentation.

When all is said that can be said about the violences that from time to time invade the poem, it remains true that the complete work affects the reader most powerfully with that wide unity of impression which it is the highest aim of dramatic art, and perhaps of all art, to produce. After we have listened to all the whimsical dogmatising about beauty, to all the commonplace about morbid anatomy, to all the reproach for unpardonable perversities of phrase and outrages on rhythm, there is left to us the consciousness that a striking human transaction has been seized by a vigorous and profound imagination, that its many diverse threads have been wrought into a single, rich, and many-coloured web of art, in which we may see traced for us the labyrinths of passion and indifference, stupidity and craft, prejudice and chance, along which truth and justice have to find a devious and doubtful way. The transaction itself, lurid and fuliginous, is secondary to the manner of its handling and presentment. We do not derive our sense of unity from the singleness and completeness of the tragedy, so much as from the power with which its own circumstances as they happened, the rumours which clustered about it from the minds of men without, the many moods, fancies, dispositions, which it for the moment brought out into light, playing round the fact, the half-sportive flights with which lawyers, judges, quidnuncs of the street, darted at conviction and snatched haphazard at truth, are all flung together into one self-sufficient and compacted shape.

But, they say, this shape is not beautiful, and the end of art is beauty. Verbal fanaticism is always perplexing, and, rubbing my eyes, I ask whether that beauty means anything more than such an arrangement and disposition of the parts of the work as, first kindling a great variety of dispersed emotions and thoughts in the mind of the spectator, finally concentrates them in a single mood of joyous, sad, meditative, or interested delight. The sculptor, the painter, and the musician, have each their special means of producing this final and superlative impression; each is bound by the strictly limited capability in one direction and another of the medium in which he works. In poetry it is because they do not perceive how much more manifold and varied are the means of reaching the end than in the other expressions of art, that people insist each upon some particular quiddity which, entering into composition, alone constitutes it genuinely poetic, beautiful, or artistic. Pressing for definition, you never get much further than that each given quiddity means a certain

Whatness. This is why poetical criticism is often so little catholic. A man remembers that a poem in one style has filled him with consciousness of beauty and delight. Why conclude that this style constitutes the one access to the same impression? Why not rather perceive that, to take modern poets, the beauty of *Thyrsis* is mainly produced by a fine suffusion of delicately toned emotion; that of *Atalanta* by splendid and barely rivalled music of verse; of *In Memoriam* by its ordered and harmonious presentation of a sacred mood; of the *Spanish Gypsy*, in the parts where it reaches beauty, by a sublime ethical passion; of the *Earthly Paradise*, by sweet and simple reproduction of the spirit of the younger-hearted times? There are poems by Browning in which it is difficult, or, let us frankly say, impossible, for most of us at all events and as yet, to discover the beauty or the shape. But if beauty may not be denied to a work which, abounding in many-coloured scenes and diverse characters, in vivid image and portraiture, wide reflection and multiform emotion, does further, by a broad thread of thought running under all, bind these impressions into one supreme and elevated conviction, then assuredly, whatever we may think of this passage or that, that episode or the other, the first volume or the third, we cannot deny that *The Ring and the Book*, in its perfection and integrity, fully satisfies the conditions of artistic triumph. Are we to ignore the grandeur of a colossal statue, and the nobility of the human conceptions which it embodies, because here and there we notice a flaw in the marble, a blemish in its colour, a jagged slip of the chisel? 'It is not force of intellect,' as George Eliot has said, 'which causes ready repulsion from the aberration and eccentricities of greatness, any more than it is force of vision that causes the eye to explore the warts in a face bright with human expression; it is simply the negation of high sensibilities.'

Then, it is asked by persons of another and still more rigorous temper, whether, as the world goes, the subject, or its treatment either, justifies us in reading some twenty-one thousand and seventy-five lines, which do not seem to have any direct tendency to make us better or to improve mankind. This objection is an old enemy with a new face, and need not detain us, though perhaps the crude and incessant application of a narrow moral standard, thoroughly misunderstood, is one of the intellectual dangers of our time. You may now and again hear a man of really masculine character confess that though he loves Shakespeare and takes habitual delight in his works, he cannot see that he was a particularly moral writer. That is to say, Shakespeare is never directly didactic; you can no more get a system of morals out of his writings than you can get such a system out of the writings of the ever-searching Plato. But, if we must be quantitative, one great creative poet probably exerts a nobler, deeper, more permanent ethical influence than a dozen generations of professed moral teachers. It is a commonplace to the wise, and an everlasting puzzle to the foolish, that direct inculcation of morals should invariably prove so powerless an instrument, so futile a method. The truth is that nothing can be more powerfully efficacious from the moral point of view than the exercise of an exalted creative art, stirring within the intelligence of the spectator active thought and curiosity about many types of character and many changeful issues of conduct and fortune, at once enlarging and elevating the range of his reflections on mankind, ever kindling his sympathies into the warm and continuous glow that purifies and strengthens nature, and fills men with that love of humanity which is the best inspirer of virtue. Is not this why music, too, is to be counted supreme among moral agents, soothing disorderly passion by diving down into the hidden deeps of character where there is no disorder, and touching the diviner mind? Given a certain rectitude as well as vigour of intelligence, then whatever stimulates the fancy, expands the imagination, enlivens meditation upon the great human drama, is essentially moral. Shakespeare does all this, as if sent Iris-like from the immortal gods, and *The Ring and the Book* has a measure of the same incomparable quality.

A profound and moving irony subsists in the very structure of the poem. Any other human transaction that ever was, tragic or comic or plain prosaic, may be looked at in a like spirit. As the world's talk bubbled around the dumb anguish of Pompilia, or the cruel hate of Guido, so it does around the hourly tragedies of all times and places.

> The instinctive theorizing whence a fact
> Looks to the eye as the eye likes the look.—
>
> Vibrations in the general mind
> At depth of deed already out of reach.—
>
> Live fact deadened down,
> Talked over, bruited abroad, whispered away:

if we reflect that these are the conditions which have marked the formation of all the judgments that we hold by, and which are vivid in operation and effect at this hour, the deep irony and the impressive meaning of the poem are both obvious:—

> So learn one lesson hence
> Of many which whatever lives should teach:
> This lesson, that our human speech is naught,
> Our human testimony false, our fame
> And human estimation words and wind.

It is characteristic of Browning that he thus casts the moral of his piece in an essentially intellectual rather than an emotional form, appealing to hard judgment rather than to imaginative sensibility. Another modern poet of original genius, of whom men had some right to complain that he gave them so little, ends a poem in two or three lines which are worth quoting here for the illustration they afford of what has just been said about Browning:—

> Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul,
> When hot for certainties in this our life!—

In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore ![1]

This is imaginative and sympathetic in thought as well as expression, and the truth and the image enter the writer's mind together, the one by the other. The lines convey poetic sentiment rather than reasoned truth ; while Browning's close would be no unfit epilogue to a scientific essay on history, or a treatise on the errors of the human understanding and the inaccuracy of human opinion and judgment. This is the common note of his highest work ; hard thought and reason illustrating themselves in dramatic circumstance, and the thought and reason are not wholly fused, they exist apart and irradiate with far-shooting beams the moral confusion of the tragedy. This is, at any rate, emphatically true of *The Ring and the Book.* The fulness and variety of creation, the amplitude of the play and shifting of characters and motive and mood, are absolutely unforced, absolutely uninterfered with by the artificial exigencies of ethical or philosophic purpose. There is the purpose, full-grown, clear in outline, unmistakable in significance. But the just proprieties of place and season are rigorously observed, because Browning, like every other poet of his quality, has exuberant and adequate delight in mere creation, simple presentment, and returns to bethink him of the meaning of it all only by and by. The pictures of Guido, of

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[1] George Meredith's *Modern Love.*

Pompilia, of Caponsacchi, of Dominus Hyacinthus de Archangelis, of Pope Innocent, are each of them full and adequate as conceptions of character in active manifestation, apart from the truth which the whole composition is meant to illustrate, and which clothes itself in this terrible drama.

The scientific attitude of the intelligence is almost as markedly visible in Browning as the strength of his creative power. The lesson of *The Ring and the Book* is perhaps as nearly positive as anything poetic can be. It is true that ultimately the drama ends in a vindication of what are called the ways of God to man, if indeed people are willing to put themselves off with a form of omnipotent justice that is simply a partial retribution inflicted on the monster, while torture and butchery fall upon the victims more or less absolutely blameless. As if the fact of punishment at length overtaking the guilty Franceschini were any vindication of the justice of that assumed Providence, which had for so long a time awarded punishment far more harsh to the innocent Pompilia. So far as you can be content with the vindication of a justice of this less than equivocal quality, the sight of the monster brought to the

> Close fetid cell,
> Where the hot vapour of an agony,
> Struck into drops on the cold wall, runs down—
> Horrible worms made out of sweat and tears—

may in a sense prove satisfactory enough. But a man must be very dull who in reading the poem does not perceive that the very spirit of it points to the thousand hazards that even this fragment of justice had to run in saving itself, and bringing about such partially righteous consummation as destiny permits. True opinion fares yet more perilously. *Half-Rome*, the *Other Half-Rome*, the *Tertium Quid*, which is perhaps most masterly and finished of the three, show us how ill truth sifts itself, to how many it never comes at all, how blurred, confused, next door to false, it is figured even to those who seize it by the hem of the garment. We may, perhaps, yawn over the intermingled Latin and law of Arcangeli, in spite of the humour of parts of it, as well as over the vapid floweriness of his rival; but for all that, we are touched keenly by the irony of the methods by which the two professional truth-sifters darken counsel with words, and make skilful sport of life and fact. The whole poem is a parable of the feeble and half-hopeless struggle that truth has to make against the ways of the world. That in this particular case truth and justice did win some pale victory does not weaken the force of the lesson. The victory was such and so won as to stir in us awful thoughts of fatal risks and certain defeats, of falsehood a thousand times clasped for truth, of fact a thousand times banished for fancy :—

> Because Pompilia's purity prevails,
> Conclude you, all truth triumphs in the end?
> So might those old inhabitants of the ark,
> Witnessing haply their dove's safe return,

> Pronounce there was no danger all the while
> O' the deluge, to the creature's counterparts,
> Aught that beat wing i' the world, was white or soft,
> And that the lark, the thrush, the culver too,
> Might equally have traversed air, found earth,
> And brought back olive-branch in unharmed bill.
> Methinks I hear the Patriarch's warning voice—
> 'Though this one breast, by miracle, return,
> No wave rolls by, in all the waste, but bears
> Within it some dead dove-like thing as dear,
> Beauty made blank and harmlessness destroyed!'

Or, to take another simile from the same magnificent passage, in which the dignity of the verse fitly matches the deep truth of the preacher's monitions:—

> Romans! An elder race possessed your land
> Long ago, and a false faith lingered still,
> As shades do, though the morning-star be out,
> Doubtless, some pagan of the twilight-day
> Has often pointed to a cavern-mouth,
> Obnoxious to beholders, hard by Rome,
> And said,—nor he a bad man, no, nor fool,—
> Only a man, so, blind like all his mates,—
> 'Here skulk in safety, lurk, defying law,
> The devotees to execrable creed,
> Adoring—with what culture . . Jove, avert
> Thy vengeance from us worshippers of thee! . .
> What rites obscene—their idol-god, an Ass!'
> So went the word forth, so acceptance found,
> So century re-echoed century,
> Cursed the accursed,—and so, from sire to son,
> You Romans cried, 'The offscourings of our race
> Corrupt within the depths there: fitly, fiends
> Perform a temple-service o'er the dead:
> Child, gather garment round thee, pass nor pry!'
> So groaned your generations: till the time
> Grew ripe, and lightning hath revealed, belike,—

> Thro' crevice peeped into by curious fear,—
> Some object even fear could recognise
> I' the place of spectres; on the illumined wall,
> To-wit, some nook, tradition talks about,
> Narrow and short, a corpse's length, no more:
> And by it, in the due receptacle,
> The little rude brown lamp of earthenware,
> The cruse, was meant for flowers, but held the blood,
> The rough-scratched palm-branch, and the legend left
> *Pro Christo.* Then the mystery lay clear:
> The abhorred one was a martyr all the time,
> A saint whereof earth was not worthy. What?
> Do you continue in the old belief?
> Where blackness bides unbroke, must devils be?
> Is it so certain, not another cell
> O' the myriad that make up the catacomb,
> Contains some saint a second flash would show?
> Will you ascend into the light of day
> And, having recognised a martyr's shrine,
> Go join the votaries that gape around
> Each vulgar god that awes the market-place?

With less impetuosity and a more weightily reasoned argument the Pope confronts the long perplexity and entanglement of circumstances with the fatuous optimism insisting that somehow justice and virtue do rule in the world. Consider all the doings at Arezzo, before and after the consummation of the tragedy. What of the Aretine archbishop, to whom Pompilia cried 'Protect me from the fiend!'?—

> No, for thy Guido is one heady, strong,
> Dangerous to disquiet: let him bide!
> He needs some bone to mumble, help amuse
> The darkness of his den with: so, the fawn
> Which limps up bleeding to my foot and lies,
> —Come to me, daughter,—thus I throw him back!

Then the monk to whom she went, imploring him to write to Rome :—

> He meets the first cold sprinkle of the world
> And shudders to the marrow, 'Save this child ?
> Oh, my superiors, oh, the Archbishop here !
> Who was it dared lay hand upon the ark
> His betters saw fall nor put finger forth ?'

Worst of all, the Convent of the Convertites, women to whom she was consigned for help,

> They do help ; they are prompt to testify
> To her pure life and saintly dying days.
> She dies, and lo, who seemed so poor, proves rich !
> What does the body that lives through helpfulness
> To women for Christ's sake ? The kiss turns bite,
> The dove's note changes to the crow's cry : judge !
>   'Seeing that this our Convent claims of right
> What goods belong to those we succour, be
> The same proved women of dishonest life,—
> And seeing that this Trial made appear
> Pompilia was in such predicament,—
> The Convent hereupon pretends to said
> Succession of Pompilia, issues writ,
> And takes possession by the Fisc's advice.'
> Such is their attestation to the cause
> Of Christ, who had one saint at least, they hoped :
> But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse
> To slander, and an infant-heir to cheat ?
> Christ must give up his gains then ! They unsay
> All the fine speeches,—who was saint is whore.

It is not wonderful if his review of all the mean and dolorous circumstances of this cycle of wrong brings the Pope face to face with the unconquerable problem for the Christian believer, the keystone of the grim arch of religious doubt and despair, through which the courageous soul must needs pass to creeds of reason and life. Where is 'the gloriously decisive change, the immeasurable metamorphosis' in human worth that should in some sort justify the consummate price that had been paid for man these seventeen hundred years before?

> Had a mere adept of the Rosy Cross
> Spent his life to consummate the Great Work,
> Would not we start to see the stuff it touched
> Yield not a grain more than the vulgar got
> By the old smelting-process years ago?
> If this were sad to see in just the sage
> Who should profess so much, perform no more,
> What is it when suspected in that Power
> Who undertook to make and made the world,
> Devised and did effect man, body and soul,
> Ordained salvation for them both, and yet . . .
> Well, is the thing we see, salvation?

It is certain that by whatever other deficiencies it may be marked *The Ring and the Book* is blameless for the most characteristic of all the shortcomings of contemporary verse, a grievous sterility of thought. And why? Because sterility of thought is the blight struck into the minds of men by timorous and halt-footed scepticism, by a half-hearted dread of what chill thing the truth might prove itself, by unmanly reluctance or moral incapacity to carry the faculty of poetic vision over the whole field; and because Browning's intelligence, on the other hand, is masculine and courageous, moving cheerfully on the solid earth of an articulate and defined conviction, and careful not to omit realities from the conception of the great drama, merely for being unsightly to the too fastidious eye, or jarring in the ear, or too bitterly perplexing to faith or understanding. It is this resolute feeling after fact, and grip of fact, that is at the root of his distinguishing fruitfulness of thought, and it is exuberance of thought, spontaneous, well-marked, and sapid, that keeps him out of poetical preaching, on the one hand, and mere making of music, on the other. Regret as we may the rudeness and barbarisms into which Browning's art too often falls, let us ever remember how much he has to say, and how effectively he communicates the shock of new thought first imparted to him by the vivid conception of a black and far-reaching story. The value of the thought, indeed, is not to be measured by poetic tests; but still the thought has poetic value, too, for it is this which has stirred in the writer that keen yet impersonal interest in the actors of his story and in its situations which is one of the most certain notes of true dramatic feeling, and which therefore gives the most unfailing stimulus to the interest of the appreciative reader.

At first sight *The Ring and the Book* appears wanting in the grandeur which, in a composition of such enormous length, criticism must pronounce to be a fundamental and indispensable element. In an ordinary way this effect of grandeur is produced either by some heroic action surrounded by circumstances of supreme state, as in the finest of the Greek plays; or as in *Paradise Lost* by the presence of personages of majestic sublimity of bearing and divine association; or as in *Faust* or *Hamlet* by the stupendous moral abysses which the poet fitfully discloses. None of these things are to be found in *The Ring and the Book.* The action of Caponsacchi, though noble and disinterested, is hardly heroic in the highest dramatic sense. There was no marching to the stake, no deliberate encountering of the mightier risks, no voluntary submission to a lifelong endurance. True, this came in the end, but it was an end unforeseen, and one therefore not to be associated with the first conception of the original act. Besides, Guido is so saturated with hateful and ignoble motive as to fill the surrounding air with influences that preclude heroic association. It has been said of the great men to whom the Byzantine Empire once or twice gave birth, that even their fame has a curiously tarnished air, as if that too had been touched by the evil breath of the times. And in like manner we may say of Guido Franceschini that even to have touched him in the way of resistance detracts from pure heroism. Perhaps the same consideration explains the comparative disappointment which most people seem to have felt with *Pompilia* in the third volume. Again, there is nothing which can be rightly called majesty of character visible in one personage or another. There is high devotion in Caponsacchi, a large-minded and free sagacity in Pope Innocent, and around Pompilia the tragic pathos of an unutterable woe, which by its intensity might raise her to grandeur if it sprang from some more solemn source than the mere malignity and baseness of a black-souled monster. Lastly, there is nothing in *The Ring and the Book* of the 'certain incommensurableness' that Goethe found in his own *Faust*. The poem is kept closely concrete and strictly commensurable by the very framework of its story :—

> pure crude fact,
> Secreted from man's life when hearts beat hard,
> And brains, high-blooded, ticked two centuries since.

It moves from none of the supernatural agencies that give the impulse to our interest in *Faust*, nor from the sublimer yearning after things unspeakable alike in *Faust* and in *Hamlet*.

Yet, notwithstanding its lack of the accustomed elements of grandeur, there is a profound impressiveness about *The Ring and the Book* that must arise from the presence of some other fine compensating quality. Perhaps one may say that this equivalent for grandeur is a certain simple touching of our sense of human kinship, of the large identity of the conditions of the human lot, of the piteous fatalities that bring the lives of the great multitude of men to be little more than 'grains of sand to be blown by the wind.' This old woe, the poet says, now in the fulness of the days again lives,

> *If precious be the soul of man to man.*

This is the implanted sentiment to which his poem makes successful appeal. Nor is it mocked by mere outpouring of scorn on the blind and fortuitous groping of men and societies of men after truth and justice and traces of the watchfulness of 'the unlidded eye of God.' Rather it is this inability to see beyond the facts of our condition some diviner, ever-present law, that helps to knit us to our kind, our brethren 'whom we have seen.'

MEMORIALS OF A MAN OF LETTERS.

WHAT are the qualities of a good contributor? What makes a good Review? Is the best literature produced by the writer who does nothing else but write, or by the man who tempers literature by affairs? What are the different recommendations of the rival systems of anonymity and signature? What kind of change, if any, has passed over periodical literature since those two great periodicals, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, held sway? These and a number of other questions in the same matter must naturally be often present to the mind of any one who is concerned in the control of a Review, and a volume has just been printed [1879] which sets such musings once more astir. Mr. Macvey Napier was the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* from 1829—when Jeffrey, after a reign of seven-and-twenty years, resigned it into his hands—until his death in 1847. A portion of the correspondence addressed to Mr. Napier during this period is full of personal interest both to the man of letters and to that more singular personage, the impresario of men of letters, the *entrepreneur* of the spiritual power, the Editor.

To manage an opera-house is usually supposed to tax human powers more urgently than any position save that of a general in the very heat and stress of battle. The orchestra, the chorus, the subscribers, the first tenor, a pair of rival prima donnas, the newspapers, the box-agents in Bond Street, the army of hangers-on in the flies—all combine to demand such gifts of tact, resolution, patience, foresight, tenacity, flexibility, as are only expected from the great ruler or the great soldier. The editor of a periodical of public consideration—and the *Edinburgh Review* in the hands of Mr. Napier was the avowed organ of the ruling Whig powers—is sorely tested in the same way. The rival house may bribe his stars. His popular epigrammatist is sometimes as full of humours as a spoiled soprano. The favourite pyrotechnist is systematically late and procrastinatory, or is piqued because his punctuation or his paragraphs have been meddled with. The contributor whose article would be in excellent time if it did not appear before the close of the century, or never appeared at all, pesters you with warnings that a month's delay is a deadly blow to progress, and stays the procession of the ages. The contributor who could profitably fill a sheet, insists on sending a treatise.

Ah, que de choses dans un menuet! cried Marcel, the great dancing-master, and ah, what things in the type and ἰδέα of an article! cries an editor with the enthusiasm of his calling; such proportion, measure, comprehension, variety of topics, pithiness of treatment, all within a space appointed with Procrustean rigour. This is what the soul of the volunteer contributor is dull to. Of the minor vexations who can tell ? There is one single tribulation dire enough to poison life—even if there were no other—and this is disorderly manuscript. Empson, Mr. Napier's well-known contributor, was one of the worst offenders ; he would never even take the trouble to mark his paragraphs. It is my misfortune to have a manuscript before me at this moment that would fill thirty of these pages, and yet from beginning to end there is no indication that it is not to be read at a single breath. The paragraph ought to be, and in all good writers it is, as real and as sensible a division as the sentence. It is an organic member in prose composition, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, just as a stanza is an organic and definite member in the composition of an ode. 'I fear my manuscript is rather disorderly,' says another, 'but I will correct carefully in print.' Just so. Because he is too heedless to do his work in a workmanlike way, he first inflicts fatigue and vexation on the editor whom he expects to read his paper ; second, he inflicts considerable and quite needless expense on the publisher ; and thirdly, he inflicts a great deal of tedious and thankless labour on the printers, who are for the most part far more meritorious persons than fifth-rate authors. It is true that Burke returned such disordered proofs that the printer usually found it least troublesome to set the whole afresh, and Miss

Martineau tells a story of a Scotch compositor who fled from Edinburgh to avoid Carlyle's manuscript, and to his horror was presently confronted after his migration with a piece of the too familiar copy. 'Lord, have mercy!' he cried. 'Have *you* got that man to print for?' But most editors will cheerfully forgive such transgressions to all contributors who will guarantee that they write as well as Burke or Carlyle. Alas! it is usually the case that those who have least excuse are the worst offenders. The slovenliest manuscripts come from persons to whom the difference between an hour and a minute is of the very smallest importance. This, however, is a digression, only to be excused by a hope that some persons of sensitive conscience may be led to ponder whether there may not be, after all, some moral obligations even towards editors and printers.

Mr. Napier had one famous contributor, who stands out alone in the history of editors. Lord Brougham's traditional connection with the *Review*,—he had begun to write either in its first or third number, and had written in it ever since—his encyclopaedic ignorance, his power, his fame in the country, and the prestige which his connection reflected on the *Review*, all made him a personage with whom it would have been imprudent or even ruinous to quarrel. Yet the position in which Mr. Napier was placed, after Brougham's breach with the Whigs, was one of the most difficult in which the conductor of a powerful organ could possibly be placed. The *Review* was the representative, the champion, and the mouthpiece of the Whig party, and of the Whigs who were in office. Before William IV. dismissed the Whigs in 1834 as arbitrarily as his father had dismissed the Whigs in 1784, Brougham had covered himself with disrepute among his party by a thousand pranks, and after the dismissal he disgusted them by asking the new Chancellor to make him Chief Baron of the Exchequer. When Lord Melbourne returned to power in the following year, this and other escapades were remembered against him. 'If left out,' said Lord Melbourne, 'he would indeed be dangerous; but if taken in, he would simply be destructive.' So Brougham was left out, Pepys was made Chancellor, and the Premier compared himself to a man who has broken with a termagant mistress and married the best of cooks. Mr. Napier was not so happy. The termagant was left on his hands. He had to keep terms with a contributor who hated with deadly hatred the very government that the *Review* existed to support. No editor ever had such a contributor as Brougham. He scolds, he storms, he hectors, he lectures; he is for ever threatening desertion and prophesying ruin; he exhausts the vocabulary of opprobrium against his correspondent's best friends; they are silly slaves, base traitors, a vile clique 'whose treatment of me has been the very *ne plus ultra* of ingratitude, baseness, and treachery.' He got the *Review* and its editor into a scrape which shook the world at the time (1834), by betraying Cabinet secrets to spite Lord

Durham. His cries against his adversaries are as violent as the threats of Ajax in his tent, and as loud as the bellowings of Philoctetes at the mouth of his cave. Here is one instance out of a hundred :—

> That is a trifle, and I only mention it to beg of you to pluck up a little courage, and not be alarmed every time any of the little knot of threateners annoy you. *They want to break off all kind of connection between me and the Edinburgh Review.* I have long seen it. Their fury against the article in the last number knows no bounds, and they will never cease till they worry you out of your connection with me, and get the whole control of the Review into their own hands, by forcing you to resign it yourself. A *party and a personal* engine is all they want to make it. What possible right can any of these silly slaves have to object to my opinion being—what it truly is—against the Holland House theory of Lord Chatham's madness? I *know* that Lord Grenville treated it with contempt. I know others now living who did so too, and I know that so stout a Whig as Sir P. Francis was clearly of that opinion, and he knew Lord Chatham personally. I had every ground to believe that Horace Walpole, a vile, malignant, and unnatural wretch, though a very clever writer of Letters, was nine-tenths of the Holland House authority for the tale. I knew that a baser man in character, or a meaner in capacity than the first Lord Holland existed not, even in those days of job and mediocrity. Why, then, was I bound to take a false view because Lord Holland's family have inherited his hatred of a great rival?

Mr. Napier, who seems to have been one of the most considerate and high-minded of men, was moved to energetic remonstrance on this occasion. Lord Brougham explained his strong language away, but he was incapable of really controlling himself, and the strain was never lessened until 1843, when the correspondence ceases, and there had been a quarrel between him and his too long-suffering correspondent. Yet, John Allen,—that able scholar and conspicuous figure in the annals of Holland House—wrote of Brougham to Mr. Napier :—'He is not a malignant or bad-hearted man, but he is an unscrupulous one, and where his passions are concerned or his vanity irritated, there is no excess of which he is not capable.' Of Brougham's strong and manly sense, when passion or vanity did not cloud it, and even of a sort of careful justice, these letters give more than one instance. The *Quarterly Review*, for instance, had an article on Romilly's Memoirs, which to Romilly's friends seemed to do him less than justice. Brougham took a more sensible view.

> Surely we had no right whatever to expect that they whom Romilly had all his life so stoutly opposed, and who were treated by him with great harshness, should treat him as his friends would do, and at the very moment when a most injudicious act of his family was bringing out all his secret thoughts against them. Only place yourself in the same position, and suppose that Canning's private journals had been published,—the journals he may have kept while the bitterest enemy of the Whigs, and in every page of which there must have been some passage offensive to the feelings of the living and of the friends of the dead. Would any mercy have been shown to Canning's character and memory by any of the Whig party, either in society or in Reviews? Would the line have been drawn of only attacking

> Canning's executors, who published the papers, and leaving Canning himself untouched? Clearly and certainly not, and yet I am putting a very much weaker case, for we had joined Canning, and all political enmity was at an end: whereas the Tories and Romilly never had for an hour laid aside their mutual hostility.

If he was capable of equity, Brougham was also capable of hearty admiration, even of an old friend who had on later occasions gone into a line which he intensely disliked. It is a relief in the pages of furious anger and raging censure to come upon what he says of Jeffrey.

> I can truly say that there never in all my life crossed my mind one single unkind feeling respecting him, or indeed any feeling but that of the warmest affection and the most unmingled admiration of his character, believing and knowing him to be as excellent and amiable as he is great in the ordinary, and, as I think, the far less important sense of the word.

Of the value of Brougham's contributions we cannot now judge. They will not, in spite of their energy and force, bear re-reading to-day, and perhaps the same may be said of three-fourths of Jeffrey's once famous essays. Brougham's self-confidence is heroic. He believed that he could make a speech for Bolingbroke, but by and by he had sense enough to see that, in order to attempt this, he ought to read Bolingbroke for a year, and then practise for another year. In 1838 he thought nothing of undertaking, amid all the demands of active life, such a bagatelle as a History of the French Revolution. 'I have some little knack of narrative,' he says, 'the most difficult by far of all styles, and never yet attained in perfection but by Hume and Livy; and I bring as much oratory and science to the task as most of my predecessors.' But what sort of science? And what has oratory to do with it? And how could he deceive himself into thinking that he could retire to write a history? Nobody that ever lived would have more speedily found out the truth of Voltaire's saying, '*Le repos est une bonne chose, mais l'ennui est son frère.*' The truth is that we learn, after a certain observation of the world, to divide amazement pretty equally between the literary voluptuary or over-fastidious collegian, on the one hand, who is so impressed by the size of his subject that he never does more than collect material and make notes, and the presumptuous politician, on the other hand, who thinks that he can write a history or settle the issues of philosophy and theology in odd half-hours. The one is so enfeebled in will and literary energy after his *viginti annorum lucubrationes*; the other is so accustomed to be content with the hurry, the unfinishedness, the rough-and-ready methods of practical affairs, and they both in different ways measure the worth and seriousness of literature so wrongly in relation to the rest of human interests.

The relations between Lord Brougham and Mr. Napier naturally suggest a good many reflections on the vexed question of the comparative advantages of the old and the new theory of a periodical. The new theory is that a periodical should not be an organ but an open pulpit, and that each writer should sign his name. Without disrespect to ably conducted and eminent contemporaries of long standing, it may be said that the tide of opinion and favour is setting in this direction. Yet, on the whole, experience perhaps leads to a doubt whether the gains of the system of signature are so very considerable as some of us once expected. An editor on the new system is no doubt relieved of a certain measure of responsibility. Lord Cockburn's panegyric on the first great editor may show what was expected from a man in such a position as Jeffrey's. 'He had to discover, and to train, authors; to discern what truth and the public mind required; to suggest subjects; to reject, and, more offensive still, to improve, contributions; to keep down absurdities; to infuse spirit; to excite the timid; to repress violence; to soothe jealousies; to quell mutinies; to watch times; and all this in the morning of the reviewing day, before experience had taught editors conciliatory firmness, and contributors reasonable submission. He directed and controlled the elements he presided over with a master's judgment. There was not one of his associates who could have even held these elements together for a single year. . . . Inferior to these excellences, but still important, was his dexterity in revising the writings of others. Without altering the general tone or character of the composition, he had great skill in leaving out defective ideas or words, and in so aiding the original by lively or graceful touches, that reasonable authors were surprised and charmed on seeing how much better they looked than they thought they would' (Cockburn's *Life of Jeffrey*, i. 301).

From such toils and dangers as these the editor of a Review with signed articles is in the main happily free. He has usually suggestions to make, for his experience has probably given him points of view as to the effectiveness of this or that feature of an article for its own purpose, that would not occur to a writer. The writer is absorbed in his subject, and has been less accustomed to think of the public. But this exercise of a claim to a general acquiescence in the judgment and experience of a man who has the best reasons for trying to judge rightly, is a very different thing from the duty of drilling contributors and dressing contributions as they were dressed and drilled by Jeffrey. As Southey said, when groaning under the mutilations inflicted by Gifford on his contributions to the *Quarterly*, 'there must be a power expurgatory in the hands of the editor; and the misfortune is that editors frequently think it incumbent on them to use that power merely because they have it' (Southey's Life, iv. 18). This is probably true on the anonymous system, where the editor is answerable for every word, and for the literary form no less than for the substantial soundness or interest of an article. In a man of weakish literary vanity—Jeffrey was evidently full of it—there may well be a constant itch to set his betters right in trifles, as Gifford thought that he could mend Southey's adjectives. To a vain editor, or a too masterful editor, the temptation under the anonymous system is no doubt strong. M. Buloz, it is true, the renowned conductor of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, is said to have insisted on, and to have freely practised, the fullest editorial prerogative over articles that were openly signed by the most eminent names in France. But M. Buloz had no competitor, and those who did not choose to submit to his Sultanic despotism were shut out from the only pulpit whence they were sure of addressing the congregation that they wanted. In England contributors are better off; and no editor of a signed periodical would either feel bound or be permitted to take such trouble about mere wording of sentences as Gifford and Jeffrey were in the habit of taking.

There is, however, another side to this, from an editor's point of view. With responsibility—not merely for commas and niceties and literary kickshaws, but in its old sense—disappears also a portion of the interest of editorial labour. One would suppose it must be more interesting to command a man-of-war than a trading vessel; it would be more interesting to lead a regiment than to keep a tilting-yard. But the times are not ripe for such enterprises. Of literary ability of a good and serviceable kind there is a hundred or five hundred times more in the country than there was when Jeffrey, Smith, Brougham, and

Horner devised their *Review* in a ninth story in Edinburgh many years ago. It is the cohesion of a political creed that is gone, and the strength and fervour of a political school. The principles that inspired that group of strong men have been worked out. After their reforms had been achieved, the next great school was economic, and though it produced one fine orator, its work was at no time literary. The Manchester school with all their shortcomings had at least the signal distinction of attaching their views on special political questions to a general and presiding conception of the modern phase of civilisation, as industrial and pacific. The next party of advance, when it is formed, might have been expected to borrow from Cobden and Bright their hatred of war and their hatred of imperialism. After the sagacity and enlightenment of this school came the school of persiflage. A knot of vigorous and brilliant men towards 1856 rallied round the late editor of the *Saturday Review*,—and a strange chief he was for such a group,—but their flag was that of the Red Rover. They gave Philistinism many a shrewd blow, but perhaps at the same time helped to some degree—with other far deeper and stronger forces—to produce that sceptical and centrifugal state of mind, which now tends to nullify organised liberalism and paralyse the spirit of improvement. The Benthamites, led first by James Mill, and afterwards in a different key by John Mill, had pushed a number of political improvements in the radical and democratic direction during the time when the *Edinburgh* so powerfully represented more orthodox liberalism. They were the last important group of men who started together from a set of common principles, accepted a common programme of practical applications, and set to work in earnest and with due order and distribution of parts to advocate the common cause.

At present [1879] there is no similar agreement either among the younger men in parliament, or among a sufficiently numerous group of writers outside of parliament. The Edinburgh Reviewers were most of them students of the university of that city. The Westminster Reviewers had all sat at the feet of Bentham. Each group had thus a common doctrine and a positive doctrine. In practical politics it does not much matter by what different roads men have travelled to a given position. But in an organ intended to lead public opinion towards certain changes, or to hold it steadfast against wayward gusts of passion, its strength would be increased a hundredfold if all the writers in it were inspired by that thorough unity of conviction which comes from sincerely accepting a common set of principles to start from, and reaching practical conclusions by the same route. We are probably not very far from a time when such a group might form itself, and its work would for some years lie in the formation of a general body of opinion, rather than in practical realisation of this or that measure. The success of the French Republic, the peaceful order of the United States, perhaps some trouble within our own borders, will lead men with open minds to such a conception of a high and stable type of national life as will unite a sufficient number of them in a common project for pressing with systematic iteration for a complete set of organic changes. A country with such a land-system, such an electoral system, as ours, has a trying time before it. Those will be doing good service who shall unite to prepare opinion for the inevitable changes. At the present moment the only motto that can be inscribed on the flag of a liberal Review is the general device of Progress, each writer interpreting it in his own sense, and within such limits as he may set for himself. For such a state of things signature is the natural condition, and an editor, even of a signed Review, would hardly decline to accept the account of his function which we find Jeffrey giving to Mr. Napier:—'There are three legitimate considerations by which you should be guided in your conduct as editor generally, and particularly as to the admission or rejection of important articles of a political sort. (1) The effect of your decision on the other contributors upon whom you mainly rely; (2) its effect on the sale and circulation, and on the just authority of the work with the great body of its readers; and (3) your own deliberate opinion as to the safety or danger of the doctrines maintained in the article under consideration, and its tendency either to promote or retard the practical adoption of those liberal principles to which, and *their practical advancement*, you must always consider the journal as devoted.'

As for discovering and training authors, the editor under the new system has inducements that lie entirely the other way; namely, to find as many authors as possible whom the public has already discovered and accepted for itself. Young unknown writers certainly have not gained anything by the new system. Neither perhaps can they be said to have lost, for though of two articles of equal merit an editor would naturally choose the one which should carry the additional recommendation of a name of recognised authority, yet any marked superiority in literary brilliance or effective argument or originality of view would be only too eagerly welcomed in any Review in England. So much public interest is now taken in periodical literature, and the honourable competition in securing variety, weight, and attractiveness is so active, that there is no risk of a literary candle remaining long under a bushel. Miss Martineau has already been quoted (p. 344) as saying:—'I have always been anxious to extend to young or struggling authors the sort of aid which would have been so precious to me in that winter of 1829-1830, and I know that, in above twenty years, I have never succeeded but once.' One of the most distinguished editors in London, who had charge of a periodical for many years, told the present writer what comes to the same thing, namely, that in no single case during all these years did a volunteer contributor of real quality, or with any promise of eminence, present himself or herself. So many hundreds think themselves called, so few are chosen. It used to be argued that the writer under the anonymous system was hidden behind a screen and robbed of his well-earned distinction. In truth, however, it is impossible for a writer of real distinction to remain anonymous. If a writer in a periodical interests the public, they are sure to find out who he is.

Again, there is folly unfathomable in a periodical affecting an eternal consistency, and giving itself the airs of continuous individuality, and being careful not to talk sense on a given question to-day because its founders talked nonsense upon it fifty years ago. This is quite true. There is a monstrous charlatanry about the old editorial We, but perhaps there are some tolerably obvious openings for charlatanry of a different kind under our own system. The man who writes in his own name may sometimes be tempted to say what he knows he is expected from his position or character to say, rather than what he would have said if his personality were not concerned. As far as honesty goes, signature perhaps offers as many inducements to one kind of insincerity, as anonymity offers to another kind. And on the public it might perhaps be contended that there is an effect of a rather similar sort. They are in some cases tempted away from serious discussion of the matter, into frivolous curiosity and gossip about the man. All this criticism of the principle of which the *Fortnightly Review* was the earliest English adherent, will not be taken as the result, in the present writer, of Chamfort's *maladie des désabusés*; that would be both extremely ungrateful and without excuse or reason. It is merely a fragment of disinterested contribution to the study of a remarkable change that is passing over a not unimportant department of literature. One gain alone counterbalances all the drawbacks, and that is a gain that could hardly have been foreseen or expected; I mean the freedom with which the great controversies of religion and theology have been discussed in the new Reviews. The removal of the mask has led to an outburst of plain speaking on these subjects, which to Mr. Napier's generation would have seemed simply incredible. The frank avowal of unpopular beliefs or non-beliefs has raised the whole level of the discussion, and perhaps has been even more advantageous to the orthodox in teaching them more humility, than to the heterodox in teaching them more courage and honesty.

Returning to Mr. Napier's volume, we have said that it is impossible for a great writer to be anonymous. No reader will need to be told who among Mr. Napier's correspondents is the writer of the following:—

> I have been thinking sometimes, likewise, of a paper on Napoleon, a man whom, though handled to the extreme of triteness, it will be long years before we understand. Hitherto in the English tongue, there is next to nothing that betokens insight into him, or even sincere

belief of such, on the part of the writer. I should like to study the man with what heartiness I could, and form to myself some intelligible picture of him, both as a biographical and as a historical figure, in both of which senses he is our chief contemporary wonder, and in some sort the epitome of his age. This, however, were a task of far more difficulty than Byron, and perhaps not so promising at present.

And if there is any difficulty in recognising the same hand in the next proposal, it arises only from the circumstance that it is Carlyle above all others who has made Benthamism a term of reproach on the lips of men less wise than himself :—

> A far finer essay were a faithful, loving, and yet critical, and in part condemnatory, delineation of Jeremy Bentham, and his place and working in this section of the world's history. Bentham will not be put down by logic, and should not be put down, for we need him greatly as a backwoodsman : neither can reconciliation be effected till the one party understands and is just to the other. Bentham is a denyer ; he denies with a loud and universally convincing voice ; his fault is that he can *affirm* nothing, except that money is pleasant in the purse, and food in the stomach, and that by this simplest of all beliefs he can reorganise society. He can shatter it in pieces—no thanks to him, for its old fastenings are quite rotten—but he cannot reorganise it ; this is work for quite others than he. Such an essay on Bentham, however, were a great task for any one ; for me a very great one, and perhaps rather out of my road.

Perhaps Carlyle would have agreed that Mill's famous pair of essays on Bentham and Coleridge have served the purpose which he had in his mind, though we may well regret the loss of such a picture of Bentham's philosophic personality as he would surely have given us. It is touching to think of him whom we all know as the most honoured name among living veterans of letters,[1] passing through the vexed ordeal of the young recruit, and battling for his own against the waywardness of critics and the blindness of publishers. In 1831 he writes to Mr. Napier: 'All manner of perplexities have occurred in the publishing of my poor book, which perplexities I could only cut asunder, not unloose; so the MS. like an unhappy ghost still lingers on the wrong side of Styx; the Charon of —— Street durst not risk it in his *sutilis cymba*, so it leaped ashore again.' And three months later: 'I have given up the notion of hawking my little Manuscript Book about any further; for a long time it has lain quiet in its drawer, waiting for a better day.' And yet this little book was nothing less than Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution.*

It might be a lesson to small men to see the reasonableness, sense, and patience of these greater men. Macaulay's letters show him to have been a pattern of good sense and considerateness. Carlyle seems indeed to have found Jeffrey's editorial vigour more than could be endured:

> My respected friend your predecessor had some difficulty with me in adjusting the respective prerogatives of Author and Editor, for though not, as I hope, insensible

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[1] Carlyle died on February 5, 1881.

> to fair reason, I used sometimes to rebel against what I reckoned mere authority, and this partly perhaps as a matter of literary conscience; being wont to write nothing without studying it if possible to the bottom, and writing always with an almost painful feeling of scrupulosity, that light editorial hacking and hewing to right and left was in general nowise to my mind.

But we feel that the fault must have lain with Jeffrey; the qualifications that Lord Cockburn admired so much were not likely to be to the taste of a man of Carlyle's grit. That did not prevent the most original of Mr. Napier's contributors from being one of the most just and reasonable.

> I have, barely within my time, finished that paper [' Characteristics'], to which you are now heartily welcome, if you have room for it. The doctrines here set forth have mostly long been familiar convictions with me; yet it is perhaps only within the last twelvemonth that the public utterance of some of them could have seemed a duty. I have striven to express myself with what guardedness was possible; and, as there will now be no time for correcting proofs, I must leave it wholly in your editorial hands. Nay, should it on due consideration appear to you in your place (for I see that matter dimly, and nothing is clear but my own mind and the general condition of the world), unadvisable to print the paper at all, then pray understand, my dear Sir, now and always, that I am no unreasonable man; but if dogmatic enough (as Jeffrey used to call it) in my own beliefs, also truly desirous to be just towards those of others. I shall, in all sincerity, beg of you to do, without fear of offence (for in *no* point of view will there be any), what you yourself see good. A mighty work lies before the writers of this time.

It is always interesting, to the man of letters at any rate if not to his neighbours, to find what was first thought by men of admitted competence of the beginnings of writers who are now seen to have made a mark on the world. 'When the reputation of authors is made,' said Sainte-Beuve, 'it is easy to speak of them *convenablement*: we have only to guide ourselves by the common opinion. But at the start, at the moment when they are trying their first flight and are in part ignorant of themselves, then to judge them with tact, with precision, not to exaggerate their scope, to predict their flight, or divine their limits, to put the reasonable objections in the midst of all due respect—this is the quality of the critic who is born to be a critic.' We have been speaking of Carlyle. This is what Jeffrey thought of him in 1832:—

> I fear Carlyle will not do, that is, if you do not take the liberties and the pains with him that I did, by striking out freely, and writing in occasionally. The misfortune is, that he is very obstinate, and unluckily in a place like this, he finds people enough to abet and applaud him, to intercept the operation of the otherwise infallible remedy of general avoidance and neglect. It is a great pity, for he is a man of genius and industry, and with the capacity of being an elegant and impressive writer.

The notion of Jeffrey occasionally writing elegantly and impressively into Carlyle's proof-sheets is rather striking. Some of Jeffrey's other criticisms sound very curiously in our ear in these days. It is startling to find Mill's *Logic* described (1843) as a 'great unreadable book, and its elaborate demonstration of axioms and truisms.' A couple of years later Jeffrey admits, in speaking of Mill's paper on Guizot—'Though I have long thought very highly of his powers as a reasoner, I scarcely gave him credit for such large and sound views of *realities* and practical results as are displayed in this article.' Sir James Stephen—the distinguished sire of two distinguished contributors, who may remind more than one editor of our generation of the Horatian saying, that

> Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis,
> . . neque imbellem feroces
> Progenerant aquilae columbam

—this excellent writer took a more just measure of the book which Jeffrey thought unreadable.

My more immediate object in writing is to remind you of John Mill's book [*System of Logic*], of which I have lately been reading a considerable part, and I have done so with the conviction that it is one of the most remarkable productions of this nineteenth century. Exceedingly debatable indeed, but most worthy of debate, are many of his favourite tenets, especially those of the last two or three chapters. No man is fit to encounter him who is not thoroughly conversant with the moral sciences which he handles; and remembering what you told me of your own studies under Dugald Stewart, I cannot but recommend the affair to your own personal attention. You will find very few men fit to be trusted with it. You ought to be aware that, although with great circumspection, not to say timidity, Mill is an opponent of Religion in the abstract, not of any particular form of it. That is, he evidently maintains that superhuman influences on the mind of man are but a dream, whence the inevitable conclusion that all acts of devotion and prayer are but a superstition. That such is his real meaning, however darkly conveyed, is indisputable. You are well aware that it is in direct conflict with my own deepest and most cherished convictions. Yet to condemn him for holding, and for calmly publishing such views, is but to add to the difficulties of fair and full discussion, and to render truth (or supposed truth), less certain and valuable than if it had invited, and encountered, and triumphed over every assault of every honest antagonist. I, therefore, wish Mill to be treated respectfully and handsomely.

Few of Mr. Napier's correspondents seem to have been more considerate. At one period (1844) a long time had passed without any contribution from Sir James Stephen's pen appearing in the *Review*. Mr. Senior wrote a hint on the subject to the editor, and Mr. Napier seems to have communicated with Sir James Stephen, who replied in a model strain.

Have you any offer of a paper or papers from my friend John Austin? If you have, and if you are not aware what manner of man he is, it may not be amiss that you should be apprised that in these parts he enjoys, and deservedly, a very high and yet a peculiar reputation. I have a great attachment to him. He is, in the best sense of the word, a philosopher, an earnest and humble lover of wisdom. I know not anywhere a larger-minded man, and yet, eloquent as he is in speech, there is, in his written style, an involution and a lack of vivacity which renders his writings a sealed book to almost every one. Whether he will be able to assume an easier and a lighter manner, I do not know. If not, I rather fear for him when he stands at your bar. All

> I ask is, that you would convey your judgment in measured and (as far as you can honestly) in courteous terms; for he is, for so considerable a man, strangely sensitive. You must have an odd story to tell of your intercourse with the knights of the Order of the Quill.

And the letter closed with what an editor values more even than decently Christian treatment, namely the suggestion of a fine subject. This became the admirable essay on the Clapham Sect.

The author of one of the two or three most delightful biographies in all literature has published the letter to Mr. Napier in which Macaulay speaks pretty plainly what he thought about Brougham and the extent of his services to the *Review*. Brougham in turn hated Macaulay, whom he calls the third or greatest bore in society that he has ever known. He is furious—and here Brougham was certainly not wrong—over the 'most profligate political morality' of Macaulay's essay on Clive.

> In my eyes, his defence of Clive, and the audacious ground of it, merit execration. It is a most serious, and, to me, a painful subject. No—no—all the sentences a man can turn, even if he made them in pure taste, and not in Tom's snip-snap taste of the lower empire,—all won't avail against a rotten morality. The first and most sacred duty of a public man, and, above all, an author, is to keep by honest and true doctrine—never to relax—never to countenance vice—ever to hold fast by virtue. What? Are we gravely to be told, at this time of day, that a set-off may be allowed for public, and, therefore, atrocious crimes, though he admits that a common felon pleads it in vain? Gracious God,

where is this to end! What horrors will it not excuse! Tiberius's great capacity, his first-rate wit, that which made him the charm of society, will next, I suppose, be set up to give a splendour to the inhabitants of Capreae. Why, Clive's address, and his skill, and his courage are not at all more certain, nor are they qualities of a different cast. Every great ruffian, who has filled the world with blood and tears, will be sure of an acquittal, because of his talents and his success. After I had, and chiefly in the *Edinburgh Review*, been trying to restore a better, a purer, a higher standard of morals, and to wean men from the silly love of military glory, for which they are the first to pay, I find the *Edinburgh Review* preaching, not merely the old and common heresies, but ten thousand times worse, adopting a vile principle never yet avowed in terms, though too often and too much taken for a guide, unknown to those who followed it, in forming their judgments of great and successful criminals.

Of the essay on Warren Hastings he thought better, 'bating some vulgarity and Macaulay's usual want of all power of reasoning.' Lord Cockburn wrote to Mr. Napier (1844) a word or two on Macaulay. 'Delighting as I do,' says Lord Cockburn, 'in his thoughts, views, and knowledge, I feel too often compelled to curse and roar at his words and the structure of his composition. As a corrupter of style, he is more dangerous to the young than Gibbon. His seductive powers greater, his defects worse.' All good critics now accept this as true. Jeffrey, by the way, speaking of the same essay, thinks that Macaulay rates Chatham too high. 'I have always had an impression,' he says, '(though perhaps an ignorant and unjust one), that there was more good luck than wisdom in his foreign policy, and very little to admire (except his personal purity) in any part of his domestic administration.'

It is interesting to find a record, in the energetic speech of contemporary hatred, of the way in which orthodox science regarded a once famous book of heterodox philosophy. Here is Professor Sedgwick on the *Vestiges of Creation* :—

> I now know the *Vestiges* well, and I detest the book for its shallowness, for the intense vulgarity of its philosophy, for its gross, unblushing materialism, for its silly credulity in catering out of every fool's dish, for its utter ignorance of what is meant by induction, for its gross (and I dare to say, filthy) views of physiology,—most ignorant and most false,—and for its shameful shuffling of the facts of geology so as to make them play a rogue's game. I believe some woman is the author. . . . From the bottom of my soul, I loathe and detest the *Vestiges*. 'Tis a rank pill of asafoetida and arsenic, covered with gold leaf. I do, therefore, trust that your contributor has stamped with an iron heel upon the head of the filthy abortion, and put an end to its crawlings. There is not one subject the author handles bearing on life, of which he does not take a degrading view.

Mr. Napier seems to have asked him to write on the book, and Sedgwick's article, the first he ever wrote for a review, eventually appeared (1845),—without, it is to be hoped, too much of the raging contempt of the above and other letters. 'I do feel contempt, and, I hope, I shall express it. Rats hatched by the incubations of a goose—dogs playing dominos—monkeys breeding men and women—all distinctions between natural and moral done away—the Bible proved all a lie, and mental philosophy one mass of folly, all of it to be pounded down, and done over again in the cooking vessels of Gall and Spurzheim!' This was the beginning of a long campaign, just now drawing near its close. Let us at least be glad that orthodoxy, whether scientific or religious, has mended its temper.

THE END

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

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